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PAUL ROSENFELD

*Voyager in the Arts*

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PAUL ROSENFELD

*Voyager in the Arts*

*Edited by Jerome Mellquist and Lucie Wiese*

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DEDICATED TO

PAUL ROSENFELD'S

YALE CLASS OF 1912

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“ . . . a mind for ever

Voyaging through strange seas of Thought, alone.”

Wordsworth's *The Prelude*

## PREFACE

WHILE EVERY generation has its remarkable men, a whole span of American life has been singularly enriched by the presence of the critic Paul Rosenfeld. He touched many minds in three decades of generous work and living, and a diverse company of those minds has here come together to produce a mosaic of critiques on a personality virtually calling for such a compilation.

The history of literature records almost no other project like the one here attempted. Whistler, to be sure, recoiled on Ruskin and flailed him with his opinions. Post-Renaissance Italy, France, and even England, surely had their examples of retribution exacted for previous misapprehensions. Even in Greece, where criticism first extensively flourished, Aristophanes cut back at the critics with many a jibe. And yet, while admitting all such examples, still no matter what the time or its distinction, there has been nothing comparable to the work here assembled—a work in which the criticized turn back to criticize the original critic and do so by uniting for this collective purpose. This unique compilation, therefore, should forever inscribe the name of Paul Rosenfeld in that pantheon of American letters where he rightfully belongs.

## PREFACE

To all those who cooperated in this undertaking we give our thanks—not only to the “49” here included and those other contributors omitted because of restrictions on space—but also to the publishers of the *Commonweal*, *Modern Music*, the *Nation*, the *New Republic*, the *Partisan Review*, and *Tomorrow Magazine*, to Messrs. Harcourt, Brace & Company, and to the University of Chicago Press. Also to Mrs. Sherwood Anderson, to Mrs. John Peale Bishop, to Mr. Van Wyck Brooks, to Mr. Edwin Clark, to Mr. A. E. Gallatin and the Grolier Club of New York City, to Miss Georgia O’Keeffe and An American Place, to Mrs. Claire Reis and the League of Composers. In a special category of our appreciation stand Mr. Philip Platt, a Yale classmate of Paul Rosenfeld, the William Lyon Phelps Foundation, and Mrs. Eileen J. Garrett and Mr. Harold D. Vursell of Creative Age Press for their understanding of our aims and their help toward the embodiment of this book.

THE EDITORS

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PAUL ROSENFELD

*Voyager in the Arts*

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I N T R O D U C T I O N

SERAPH FROM MT. MORRIS PARK

IT COULD hardly have been expected that a neighborhood like Mt. Morris Park would produce a seraph of understanding. Rather heavy and complacent, this middle-class residential community stood with its chesty brownstone fronts facing a reach of green where nightly the lamp-lighters made their turns and promptly at nine o'clock the bell tower summoned the children to bed. Nursemaids trundled perambulators there, and governesses strolled with tiny Elsie Dinsmores in pigtails and future cotton-brokers and lawyers in Little Lord Fauntleroy suits. People still preserved the pace of Washington Irving in that uptown Manhattan suburb of the nineties, and Brooklyn seemed as distant from its nearby 125th Street as Sunnyside does today.

And yet in this neighborhood of dripping roasts, where Sunday dinners were set off by huge carved sideboards and served to the weight of clanking silver, there lived one family less anchored to these material props than the rest. This was the household of Julius Rosenfeld, a small manufacturer, who had a pronounced taste for English classics and French critics, and his wife Sara, who played the piano so well that a concert career might have been hers had not her family, the Liebmans,



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feared the threat to respectability of such a venture. Two children had been born to the couple somewhat before they moved to this middle-class fastness, and of these the elder was Paul, born in 1890. A chubby lad, he attended a grade school down at Madison Avenue and Eighty-Fifth Street, and Sundays would tread about the park with his father. Once, it is said, a neighbor addressed the father, asking him what the boy was going to become. "A writer," replied the father. Whether the neighbor looked dubious or not, the answer had been given.

Each summer the family traveled off to Elberon, where they could catch the sea breezes as they sat in cane chairs and inspected the Jersey coast. And it was there, in August of 1900, that the mother died after a major operation. The following winter the disconsolate father read for long hours to his son—many a page from Sir Walter Scott, and other of the romantic writers—and helped instruct him in literature as a resource for consolation. But after a single winter the father abandoned his home on the park of his happiness and a maternal grandmother took over care of the children, while he betook himself to a succession of lodginghouses. Paul continued living with his grandmother, seeing his father on Sundays and possibly for a dinner during the week, until, in his thirteenth year, his grandmother wishing, no doubt, to improve his posture, entered him at Riverview Military Academy at Poughkeepsie, New York.

Paul did not march very well with the military companies, though he discovered that he swung along better if there was music. He did not care for athletics, and he stayed much to himself, so much, in fact, that the faculty began to worry. A meeting was called and his case discussed. One instructor, more imaginative than the rest, urged that the boy be let alone. He

understood that the lad already had his literary and musical interests established, and if he read Shelley, Meredith, and other writers beyond his age, it would be better to let him follow his bent rather than to bend him out of it. Sometimes the boy concocted excuses to get down to New York for concerts and sometimes he would be scraped by academic exigencies. But he survived and, after five years of this military tenure, entered Yale at eighteen.

Once again his life was that of a solitary. Each of his college years he roomed alone, though he found more congenial fellowship here and had, by his junior year, begun to write free-lance critiques for a New Haven newspaper as well as literary essays for the *Yale "Lit."* Though never an outstanding student, he had attained, at the start of his senior year, an editorship on the same college publication, and would even at that early juncture discharge a few trumpet calls, as editorials, within its pages. These trumpet blasts summoned his fellows at Yale to a life dedicated rather to the common good than to money-grubbing, and urged that the common good might well be served through literature. After his graduation in 1912, he turned, still uncertain, to the Columbia School of Journalism, then embarking on its first year under the direction of Dr. Talcott Williams.

The cultivated Dr. Williams, who formerly had edited a Philadelphia newspaper where he had underscored the importance of the arts, found that in his little flock of twelve, Paul best understood when he shepherded them to visits at the Metropolitan Museum of Art, Shakespearean productions like William Faversham's *Julius Caesar*, the Armory Show (where thousands of Americans first chuckled at modern art), and the major concert halls. Furthermore, the unfolding writer showed

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a real determination when it came to getting news: he once chartered a boat so that he and a fellow classmate could scoop the town with reports for the *New York Press* when the Fleet was lying in the Hudson. Graduation followed and a total of six months on the newspapers. Suddenly, crossing one day amidst the clang and din of Forty-Second Street, Paul felt transfixed, so he later said, by a shaft of complete and instantaneous understanding. Why, he demanded of himself, should he do work that was stultifying? Why not quit the job? And having a modest income (not from the father, who died a dejected man when Paul was graduating from Riverview, but from his mother's more flourishing side of the family), he departed for Europe. Although he had repeatedly traveled to German *Bads* with a sick mother and seen the Louvre once at the age of seven, this trip to Europe introduced him to the first thoroughly agreeable environment he had ever known. Enhancing this reaction, possibly, was the fact that he had begun writing for himself and felt one with his conviction.

Returning to the United States after several months, he presently secured quarters with a Yale classmate at 20 Gramercy Place, and it was here that he prepared for his ascent. For two solid years he toiled away at a novel—a romance somewhat in the manner of Cabell—and continued his other writings, none of which was published. But events were simmering. Not only was the first World War catapulting into the headlines, young Americans were assaulting their countrymen with new prospects in the arts. Out in Chicago a noisy group began banging out fresh rhythms from ragtime, or indicting the small town, or penning dainty epistles to the muse. Edna St. Vincent Millay had put on Greek slippers and written *Renas-*

wheels of color. And in music the iconoclasts were busy. Chief among these was Leo Ornstein, an East Side boy of nineteen just back from Europe, where he had flung himself into the current of Scriabin, Schönberg, Stravinsky, and the rest who were then churning up European music—and brought back their compositions along with insurgent works of his own.

Hearing this fiery composer at an impromptu concert where camp chairs served as seats, instantly the fledgling critic knew that the door had been shivered open and he stood fully exposed to the moderns. He felt the tumultuous jet of new feelings, the stuttering note of whistles, the whine of machines. He sensed, too, that the skyscraper had at last been shot into music and that the contemporary cycle would be his. Soon afterward, fearing for the economic security of the "Nitroglycerine Kid," as he came to call Ornstein, he engaged the young rebel for a whole series of piano lessons. Somewhat later, at Blue Hill, Maine, he tramped the woods and beaches with Ornstein and there learned still more about the sources of his impetuous stormings. Expatiating on these discoveries in a letter to Claire Raphael, their common friend, he said, "We need fuel to heighten the energy that seeks to transform matter into spirit, and that fuel can be given the world only by artists of grand and lofty impulse, free and brave and generous.—Don't you agree? . . . I think Leo is on the same track. . . . To Leo the creation of beauty is far less important than the sensing of that beauty, and his art aspires not to the making of fine music, but to the making of fine people." Having found that locus, Rosenfeld would have a good point of purchase for what he would write in the future.

Returning again to New York, he listened almost nightly to the improvised performances of a string quartet meeting pe-

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riodically at the home of Miss Raphael. And it was here, as the only "outsider" permitted to listen, that he obtained his schooling in the men who had left behind Strauss and Debussy, Wagner, Brahms, and the rest of the established composers who still subdued the majority of those who sat in the leading concert halls.

Meanwhile, he had touched another bolt of electricity in his association with Waldo Frank, not only a member of the amateur string quartet, but also a critic-novelist who was even then assuming leadership among the more venturesome of the younger writers. A New Yorker and, like Rosenfeld, a graduate from Yale (though in the Class of 1911), Frank maintained direct communication with French critics like Romain Rolland, and with other live Continental minds, and he was helping to launch a new publication, the *Seven Arts*, which was shortly to transform the American cultural situation. (Later, when the new craft was successfully afloat, Frank would invite his friend to contribute some of his first articles there.) But Rosenfeld was also attracted to the nervous intellectual thrust of Frank, his hatred for the values of the market place, and his determination to create a better habitation for the spirit in the United States. Sometimes, visiting together a tiny show-place for pictures, known as "291," they were impressed by an absolute tornado of a man, the photographer Alfred Stieglitz, who whirled all comers off their feet if they dared question the rebel painters, photographers, or other artists he had championed. Still another "presence" of those days was Van Wyck Brooks, who looked even then to Rosenfeld as the "little colonel of American letters"—and whose trenchant essays had already infused a whole phalanx of the younger men with a will to enrich a tradition long consigned to impoverishment.

But probably the central force in this period of Rosenfeld's formation was Randolph Bourne. Bourne, who despite his hunchback, seemed the tallest figure he had ever seen. Bourne, the onetime piano shop employee who somehow suggested a high-tuned instrument. Bourne standing indomitably, in his black student's cape, as the personification of all that was vital and brave and good. Bourne, indeed, touched some harp-string in Paul Rosenfeld himself and exalted him as if with the sense of an almost unutterable understanding. Here was the soul of a generation.

And the soul, too, if one liked, of the *Seven Arts* where Bourne (along with James Oppenheim, founder and editor of the publication, Waldo Frank, an associate editor, and other young fighters) was sniping away at American self-satisfaction in every category—in literature, politics, and music, in education, journalism, and art—and establishing a new compact between the writer and the public—a compact that ideas from one might serve to regenerate the other. That compact they had all assembled to consolidate, but Bourne, extending like some arm from the group, had given it the very weight of the Law. Even though the publication would perish soon after America's advent into the European war, its concept of a central rejuvenation would long continue to refresh many a thinking individual. And whenever it did, a figure in a black cape, almost Gothic in its chiseled look, yet dancing of mind, would again stride forth among men, as it had in the days of 1916.

This was also the time of Rosenfeld's initiation as a writer. Not only did he publish outspoken essays in the *Seven Arts*—on the unexampled devotion to American musical culture by the Kneisel String Quartet (which had recently expired), on the music-hall cheapness of Liszt, on the combative zeal of

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Stieglitz, on the flares and ingots of the newer painters—he also published some of his earliest writings in still another hopeful publication, the *New Republic*. Here the critic unfolded still more broadly as he discussed literature along with music. Once, indeed, in his essay on Verhaeren, he used a phrase fully recapitulating not only the Belgian poet's but, as it turned out eventually, his own thirty-year battle—that some souls must toil on their hands and knees to their spiritual fulfillment.

Yet in those days difficulty was not in the Rosenfeld lexicon. Though he was badly wrenched by the War—and confined to hospital for considerable periods while in the Army at Camp Humphries, Virginia, during the later months of 1918—and though much aspiration had been blunted by the early demise of the *Seven Arts* and the dispersal of its youthful company, still these were part of the general wartime slump and not, as it were, personal afflictions. Besides, he still could correspond with Bourne and give that master spirit in a huddled frame such considerations as letting him occupy the apartment he had rented at 77 Irving Place in the year before the war broke out. But once demobilized, Rosenfeld came back to an experience almost as depleting as the Armistice.

For Bourne, whose convictions forbade him to lend his pen to recruiting purposes during the war, had gradually been frozen out by the editors. Even his literary essays were no longer wanted. Often subsiding into gloom, he no longer watched his health, became run down, and presently developed pleurisy in lungs that had long been suspected of a tubercular taint. Still insufficiently mended, he was overtaken by that scourge riding in almost apocalyptically on the very news of the Armistice—influenza—and soon his poor body was capitulating. Faithful friends who had tried to arrest his illness

found professional nurses scarce and called in Paul Rosenfeld to assist them. This he gladly did, sitting through fever-spotted nights and matching his hope against the decline of the patient's condition. Even so, having retired for a fitful snatch of sleep, he missed the final act of Bourne's life—his muttered request for a glass of eggnog and his exclamation at the glory of its golden tint as the light of the morning sun illuminated the tumbler. Immediately afterwards Bourne collapsed in the arms of the only person on duty and expired before Rosenfeld could be summoned. And no litany—not even a drift of music from lilacs that last in the dooryard bloomed—would suffice to still his grief. Many months later, it still seemed, as he said, that “a large and amazing intelligence had gone out of the world” and that almost nothing could ever replace it.

Imparting still further shades to this loss was the fact that in the post-Armistice period men seemed to be shunted about like so many logs in a vast undertow from the world's discouragement. Where the young had said yes, in 1916, they now grumbled out syllables of disbelief. Where a Brooks had charged his readers with the expectation of a prospective sunrise, now more and more he composed his essays in a tone of disenchantment. And even though Brooks and Frank and other former allies were helping young Rosenfeld find a publisher for his first book of essays, *Musical Portraits*, still the general gloom persisted and nobody seemed to generate daylight and joy. Nevertheless, that sag somehow imparted a sense of fresh responsibility to him and quickly he found the note that would be his throughout the twenties.

Then, too, certain of his friendships were extending and deepening. Ernest Bloch, a composer who had first reported



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at his apartment in 1916 with Waldo Frank, put forth rhythms as if he were the Lord of the Waters and commanded, not the surge and thunder of the *Odyssey* but the testamental roll of the prophetic books. Sherwood Anderson, the recusant Chicago writer and one of the original "finds" of the *Seven Arts*, wrote more and more of his apple-flavored tales from the Middle West, each conveying a compassion too mute for tears and each capable, it would appear, of again restoring men to fraternity. And Stieglitz that intractable, though deprived of his attic quarters at "291," had packed his paintings under his arm and continued the battle, not from regular exhibition rooms, to be sure, but by luring prospective patrons to a tiny apartment and there persuading them to provide cash so that confectors of honest canvases could eat. Best of all, a personal happiness, inspired, apparently, from the most intimate sources of Rosenfeld's being, began to emanate from many of his own writings.

As if to consolidate these developments, a magazine had arisen to replace the defunct *Seven Arts*. Newly installed at 152 West Thirteenth Street, the *Dial*, with its dignified structure of brick, its carpeted stairs, its fireplace and mantelpiece in many a room, suggested less a periodical office, perhaps, than some quiet residence where a Henry James character might be conducting his professional activities in the New York of 1830. And the *Dial* had the reserve and the character of the earlier American writer: punctilious in its respect to contributors, severe in its exactions upon the taste of its readers, and devoted, as James might have said, only to the rim of finer issues. It was precisely the outlet then required for Rosenfeld. Early in 1920, therefore, he was accepted as its regular music critic and for a total of almost seven years he wrote what stood then

and since as possibly the most provocative music evaluation ever written by an American.

This appeared at a fortuitous moment. James Hunecker, that swashbuckler whose foaming paragraphs betrayed the zest and the hilarity of many a night over the mugs, had been noticeably slipping ever since 1914. Trudging daily to his journalistic assignments, he not only had exhausted a magnificent physique, but actually had begun to draw on past deposits of stimulation. Often in his declining years he repeated himself again and again on Strauss, on Wagner, on Debussy, on Liszt. If discussing literature, he found little of enticement to compare with his favorites of nineteenth century Paris. Or, if turning to art, though he was still flexible, he wrote with considerably less zest about contemporaries than about his vacation jaunts to the great galleries of Europe. New blood was imperative.

But as Paul Rosenfeld moved into his musical—and sometimes less specialized—assignments for the *Dial*, he found a function seldom, if ever, exercised by Hunecker, and one scarcely known to the United States. This was that he served as prospector—was actually the first to spot the new vein and then to wash out the shiny metal—for the composers just emerging in America.

To be sure, he scanned from his watchtower the beacons still flaring from Europe—Stravinsky, Schönberg, Bartók, Ravel, and the rest—and evaluated them as to the amount of sky they illuminated. But meanwhile he steadily rated the work of the still-exciting Ornstein, and a more revolutionary composer, Edgard Varèse, relating their accomplishments to a new and more hopeful tone of feeling. For that had become the prime quest of Paul Rosenfeld.

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It was as a critic of contemporaries, then, that he conducted his principal searches. And if an empty pod of an academician tried to disclaim the validity of such a pursuit, he would have an answer ready, as in the *Freeman*, August 23, 1922:

Both your reviewer and Mr. Brander Matthews, whom he quotes, are mistaken in asserting that criticism, even in the narrow sense of education and disciplining of taste, "can never safely undertake to do much with contemporary literature, and that it should be left to the reviewer, who should do upon it the work of the reviewer; its critical appraisal should be left to another generation. . . ."

The history of letters is full of examples of solid criticism practiced by critics upon their contemporaries. What Lessing wrote about the tragedies of his contemporary Voltaire remains criticism, in the very sense of the word favored by your reviewer, for it educated and disciplined the taste of a nation. What Ste.-Beuve wrote of his fellow romanticists remains standard, quite as much as what he wrote of the *Pléiade*. . . .

Indeed, there have been few critics of the first rank who have not managed to criticize successfully some of the fellow workers, and to educate and discipline taste thereby. Coleridge did so. So, too, did Brandès and France and de Gourmont.

Such an outlook almost obliged its enunciator to stand up for the living element whatever its medium. And this Rosenfeld was doing by writing critiques not only on music, but on painters like John Marin and Marsden Hartley, on a novelist like Proust, on an inflammatory mind like Guillaume Apollinaire, on the experimentalist Joyce, on such American writers as Carl Sandburg, Brooks, Frank, Anderson and younger men like E. E. Cummings and other talents scarcely emerged. All

these he acclaimed, though always with an estimating eye secure in almost every case from the blandishment of personal acquaintance. And he acclaimed, often, when no other critic had lifted his pen. His support, in other words, was given at the moment of need—and because the critic felt the need in life for precisely the gift extended by the creator.

Still better, Rosenfeld actually befriended the composer, the painter, the writer, by assistance sometimes so quietly rendered as even yet to be hidden. Once, when a mere lad from Brooklyn—looking, as the critic later said, like a beneficent and bespectacled grasshopper—suggested by his first compositions the stony canyons and power-driven machinery of Manhattan, Paul Rosenfeld learned that the composer might be held back by having to drudge as a clerk. He hunted up a patroness of means and persuaded her to subsidize the young man for study in Paris. When the beneficiary returned somewhat later, he already was acknowledged as one of the soundest among the emerging composers. Later yet, hearing another composer whose wrists were still raw from his work as a teamster, Rosenfeld also found him a patron and opportunities in Paris. Once a fifteen-year-old boy was brought to him by the poet Alfred Kreymborg, and he too was assisted. Sometimes a needy composer received a stipend for note paper, again a sum to pay for a hotel bill, or else sometimes a hearty dinner cooked by the critic in his own apartment. If afterwards came a long evening when the unratified talent could play music as though to his own inward conscience, then upon leaving, he knew there was one soul who cared, and that, better still, a thoughtful mind had already listened to him as on a high plane of discovery, and that thenceforth he, the neophyte, must not descend from that level. In short, Rosenfeld not only encouraged by personal

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assistance—he prompted the artist to find the supreme eminence within his own personality.

Combining such pats of encouragement with his regular work as a critic for the *Dial* and other publications, this unusual critic had, within the span of a single decade, completed a shelf of no less than eight books. Of these, at least four—*Musical Portraits*, *Musical Chronicle*, *Modern Tendencies in Music*, and *An Hour with American Music*—were devoted to composers and kindred subjects. Three others—*Port of New York*, *Men Seen*, and *By Way of Art*—comprised a greater diversity of topics, including literary as well as plastic and musical critiques. And one, *The Boy in the Sun*, was a novel—a novel, by the way, which certainly demonstrated what a pity it was that the writer's other projected fictions never came to publication. To be sure, "Fräulein," an episodic story in a 1920 issue of the *Dial*, occasioned much applause by its portrait of a high-hearted German woman who had served the Rosenfeld *ménage* as a governess during the days at Mt. Morris Park. And *Boy in the Sun* is unforgettable for the passages on the father—his dingy days in rooming-house traps, his despondent trudging to the bars, his bubbling looks at the ladies, and finally the shove and rumble as his mental foundations gave way and hospital attendants arrived to carry him off to a sanatorium. Reading the novel, nobody could mistake the writer's sympathy for that father nor his ability to depict his plight. For that alone, one can regret that the other novels were never published.

This sunny period of Rosenfeld's life was not completed without one additional major venture in generosity. Determining, along with Lewis Mumford, Alfred Kreymborg, and Van Wyck Brooks, that many of the more independent writers still lacked a satisfactory outlet, he decided, with these other

three as collaborating editors, to provide such an outlet. Thus the genesis of the *American Caravan*, a project entailing countless hours of manuscript-reading, editorial conferences, and scouting enterprises to hunt up new prospects. But it did much to eliminate the long heartaches otherwise so often involved when the writer must wait even for the chance to get a hearing. And, like the rest of Rosenfeld's activities in the twenties, it helped not only to correct a distemper at the start of the decade, but also to engender an atmosphere where men might feel life as expansive again. All of which had been conditioned by this one man's unbreakable resistance to the dominant pulls of a period.

Resistance was again his part in the thirties, but at a greater cost and in a more demanding solitude. No longer did he have the economic security so substantially his in the twenties. Furthermore, certain publications favorable to his work had either been choked out of existence or else dammed up in their sympathies, so that, where in the previous decade he had always had an outlet for his writings, the next ten years found him obliged to hunt his gaps as a free lance. Nevertheless he persisted. Sometimes he wrote for the *New Republic*, sometimes for the *Nation*, and again for certain of the music periodicals. He still watched for new talent. He continued ready to endorse indefatigables like Stieglitz. And if a hapless painter like "Alfie" Maurer slashed his throat on some bleak day of the depression, he would do an article urging men, in effect, to stop forever such tragedies in America—both for the public good and the artist's salvation. At such moments, indeed, Rosenfeld was the very quickener of our conscience and the assurance that these mishaps would be less likely of occurrence in the future.

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Eventually, by the mid-thirties, he piled sufficient of his free-lance writings into a book to furnish a full-length volume of music estimates. This work, *Discoveries of a Music Critic*, differed from his earlier books in this category because here he dug into the past, even though he still stood sentry to every new gleam on the horizon. If less exuberant, he showed more perspective—and of course preserved that same untiring sensibility as ever. Meanwhile, too, he had helped edit two last numbers of the *Caravan*, and here again more men of ability had been discovered.

Despite such activities, however, a cleavage had opened between him and numbers of his erstwhile associates. Onetime poets became opportunists. Budding writers quit the inward toil for so-called Social Consciousness. And a wholesale drive to the Left was initiated, partly to help alleviate social injustice (here justified) but also (and here reprehensible) to substitute desire for power or mere self-aggrandizement for the solitary gains of the artist. All that Rosenfeld opposed, and he opposed it because, as he wrote in *Scribner's*, May, 1933:

From every angle one must regret the want of a body of American writers who truly believe in the artist in themselves and his particular feeling and object; and remain constant to it and unwilling utterly to abandon it for the interests and objects of the world, no matter how legitimate these may appear to them. That the stand of the author loyal to that which his experience has made him feel: the insufficiency of material comfort divorced from spiritual satisfactions; the sterility of work that does not satisfy some immaterial need very deep in the human being;—that his stand, particularly in these panicky years, will be a lonely and difficult one, is not to be denied.

Well can one remember questioning a young Social Con-

sciousness revoltee against Solitary Writing. "What," he was asked, "did you think of Paul's article?" Stroking his toothbrush mustache and looking hard through his slate-gray eyes, he replied, "It was forbidding." Too forbidding for him at any rate, for he succumbed only three years later to one of the chief magazine manufactories.

At that very moment a small, round man trudged for hours in a parade of protest against Hitler (a friend, seeing him, reported that Paul looked dusty and tired), and thus demonstrated his susceptibility to a cry for political rectitude *untied* to demands for defections by the writer. Even in that parade his particular way was that of a single person marching a track by himself. Without knowing it then, perhaps, he was stepping to the tune heard by that hermit of Walden Pond, he who said, Blame not him who is out of step—he may be listening to a different drummer.

Not on the icy slopes was he treading, however. His was a more human ground—a ground of fellowship where one hiked on spring days through the Hudson highlands, bringing along tomato sandwiches, a slab or so of meat, and maybe purchasing a cold drink or two. Or, if taking the East Shore, he would entrain with a friend to Harmon, then climb his way to the waters of the Croton Reservoir. Clouds might blacken upon men's minds from social difficulties, but he still remained luminous. On such walks, he would exclaim at the chocolaty color of the nearby hills and rejoice in the newly opened dogwoods. He was translucent and staunch and good. Later, he might phone that same friend during the week and ask him how he had recovered from his cold. Or urge him to take a holiday. Or congratulate him on something he had said. He sought not only the writer-already-writing, the painter-already-exhibiting,



## INTRODUCTION

the musician-already-composing. He could detect the heart-beat of potential expression, and know that sometimes a cold stream runs so deep as barely to achieve the surface. Nevertheless, he possessed a good divining rod and suspected where even the untapped waters might lie. So that, amidst a time of growling and surrender, he retained his equanimity and health, and though pressed by economic worries, never, by a sign or a word, did he trespass his own anxiety to the hurt of another. In brief, he was the friend of perfect objectivity—seeing the other person first—and not only first, but only.

The same objectivity permeated his writing and left him free to every fresh wind invading the American landscape. He first detected Henry Miller, and while responding to the erratic flights of that future seer-upon-the-Pacific, could also respond to the felicities of Brooks' first New England book. And if he was not reviewing a book or covering a concert or criticizing an exhibition, he could, as in a penetrating letter to Lewis Mumford, brilliantly impale the limitations of a Robinson Jeffers.

But if he remained tonic in his disposition, his health had already begun to slip. Not knowing of his incipient diabetes, one might have wondered why, in the late thirties, he had ordered the whole of his critical remarks about the painter Charles Demuth so as to inject a special significance into the discovery of the insulin treatment. And not until one saw him dodging sweets in a restaurant did one realize that he was trying to fend off illness. Sometimes, it is true, he would say that the decade of the forties in a man's life was the tragic one. But this he would accompany with a quotation from a French writer and thus dilute, as it were, his own dismay in the opinion of another.

Yet somehow he had righted himself toward the later 1930's. He worried less about finances. Again he wrote solid estimates like those in the *Musical Quarterly*. He appeared more and more frequently in the *Nation*. He contributed more regularly than before to *Modern Music*—here again resuming his battle for the younger composers and even helping to get Charles Ives his first important public hearing on a snowy winter's night in 1939.

Even as America again moved toward war, he was writing some of his most provocative music estimates in the *American Music Lover*. The one on Loeffler, in particular, might well stand as a supplementary panel to the later Brooks volume on the autumnal days of New England. Again, in evaluating Daumier for the magazine *Accent*, he summed up the genial Frenchman (and that word *genial*, how he loved it!) as a protagonist of the Aristophanic spirit and wrote such an evaluation as even the French critics have seldom surpassed.

And horrified though he was by the second World War, tempted though he often was to offer his services, he finally decided that his responsibility was still to show the light by his writing. Though such might never be his term, he would be the true Seraph to his generation. What if Knopf did turn down his autobiography? Instead he supplied a compact summary of his essential impulse in "All the World's Poughkeepsie"—that essay showing how the boy from Mt. Morris Park became the prescient youth at the military academy, and then stood ready for the lifetime of giving that was to be his.

Virtually at the same moment he was already embarked on his study of literary genres. Starting it, he wrote to Lewis Mumford, March 17, 1943:

## INTRODUCTION

I mean to include the essay on the "Novel in Journal Form" and several other essays in a little book called *Among the Kinds of Literature*. To write this book I shall have to know something about the philosophy and history of the literary *genera*; what the Greeks and Romans understood by the literary kinds, and the 17th and 18th centuries from Boileau onwards. What the situation was in Lessing's days; and in what way the modern conceptions of kinds, "the very life of literature" in Henry James' words, differs from the ancient. . . .

Sometimes, encountering him in that vast "valley of the shadow," the New York Public Library at Forty-Second Street, one would be asked to join him for a smoke on the ramp before the building. Then he would pelt one with questions. Who wrote the first prose-poem? Just where did the Pindaric novel originate? And the old eagerness would flare again, and it would seem that here once more was the prodigal critic who first rushed into fiery print when the moderns were played. He never stopped inquiring. In fact, he once said that he was like the fabled creature trying to swallow down the sea. One would see him, slower of step, sagging off to his seat where he always picked a spot because there the illumination was best. And once, only that spring before his death, it seemed that a preternatural cast had actually informed his countenance.

Ideas had become incarnate in this man. Not the cold dialectical reasoning of the subtle Greeks, or even the tempest-laden thought of the nineteenth century Frenchmen. Rather, his mind became the meeting-point of the abstract concept and the kindly warming glow. There ideas were humanized at last and a central path had been completed from Bourne to the generation of the 1950's.

For surely, though it is incomplete, his last work reaches

back in human time and men's imagination until attaining, in each of its essays, a distant nucleus of positive regeneration. And, reading, men will learn.

Reading, too, they will learn—as the vast armory of his assorted essays since 1930 is at last collected—and as they peruse the rest of his books—that here was one of the inviolate beings of American literature. And then he will indeed stand with those earlier unsullied men—the light-bringers of Concord—and like them will pass on his light to every generation that comes.



*Part One*

## THE SLIDE OF TIME



Edmund Wilson

## PAUL ROSENFELD: THREE PHASES

THE death of Paul Rosenfeld has left me not only shocked at the unexpected loss of a friend, but with a feeling of dismay and disgust at the waste of talent in the United States. Paul, when I first knew him—in 1922, I think—was one of the most exciting critics of the “American Renaissance.” I had read, while in the army in France, an essay on Sibelius in the *New Republic*, which had upon me the exhilarating effect that war-time reading sometimes does; and later, when I was back in New York, a longer study on Richard Strauss, the great musical hero of the time, which brought into the writing itself something of the Straussian brilliance but probed with a very sure hand what was specious and vulgar in Strauss. It was the first really searching criticism that I had ever seen of Strauss, and both these essays amazed me. They had a kind of fullness of tone, a richness of vocabulary and imagery, and a freedom of the cultural world that were quite different from the school-masterish criticism that had become the norm in the United States. *Musical Portraits*, in 1920, the first book that collected these pieces, seemed at the time absolutely dazzling. Paul told me, when I knew him later, that the point when he had felt his maturity was the moment when he realized with pride that he could turn out as good an article as Huneker; but actually he was better than Huneker, who, useful though he was in his role,



always remained a rather harried journalist, trying to produce a maximum of copy in order to get money to go abroad. Paul was a serious writer who was working from New York as a base. One had always had the impression that Huneker came in through the back door at Scribner's in a day when the arts were compelled to give precedence to money and respectability, and that there had been something in Bernard Shaw's prophecy that, if he stayed in the United States, he would never be anything but a "clever slummocker"; and one now heard depressing reports that he was old, poor, and ill in Brooklyn. But Paul Rosenfeld seemed the spirit of a new and more fortunate age, whose cosmopolitanism was not self-conscious and which did not have to be on the defensive over its interest in the variety of life. The portraits of Paul's first book dramatized modern music as no one had done before; they brought into range a whole fascinating world, united though international, of personality, poetics, texture, mood. Paul Rosenfeld at that time enjoyed a prestige of the same kind as Mencken's and Brooks', though it was not so widely felt as the former's.

Paul had inherited a comfortable income, and he built himself at Westport, Connecticut, a small and attractive house, where he lived alone with his work and entertained his friends. The first time I ever saw him, I had not yet met him. It was in Paris sometime in the summer of 1921, and I was dining alone one night in a favorite Italian restaurant, very clean and rather austere—I remember it as always quiet and filled with a clear twilight—to which I had been taken first by somebody during the war and to which I liked to return, ordering almost always the same meal that I had had when I first went there: ravioli and Asti Spumante. A party of three sat down at the table just across from mine, and though I had never seen any of

them before, I recognized them soon as Paul Rosenfeld, Sherwood Anderson, and Anderson's wife, the sculptress, Tennessee Mitchell. I had heard in New York that Paul was taking the Andersons to Europe, where Anderson had never been, and I observed the party with interest and heard snatches of their conversation. Tennessee Mitchell had the aspect and the manner of a raw-boned prairie woman, and I was touched by Paul's obvious effort to approximate for her benefit to a modestly folksy manner. I was reminded of the incident later when I read in Sherwood Anderson's memoirs that he had sat in the Tuileries one day—he is here apostrophizing himself—with “the tears running from your eyes, because you thought everything around you so beautiful.” It was all very typical of the period, and so are my first memories of Paul after I got to know him in New York. I spent a weekend with him once at Westport—sometime in 1922—and read him an essay I had just written about T. S. Eliot's *Waste Land* on the occasion of its getting the *Dial* prize. In the city I had been leading at that time rather a frenetic life, and I remember what a relief it was to talk about art with Paul in an atmosphere completely free from the messy dissipation and emotion that were characteristic of the twenties, and to get a good night's sleep in a house where everything was quiet and simple. I had a delightful dream, which still comes back to me quite distinctly, of little figures that were really alive though much less than life-size, dancing with slow grace to an exquisite Mozartian music which filled me with peace and joy. It was an antidote to the stridencies of the jazz age which Paul's spirit had managed to exorcise. He loathed jazz in all its raw forms and could only accept it transmuted by the style of a Stravinsky or a Copland.

With his fair reddish hair and mustache, his pink cheeks

and his limpid brown eyes, his good clothes which always followed the Brooks-cut college model, his presence, short though he was, had a certain authority and distinction. It was something that made Anderson call him the well-dressed man of American prose. He had a knack of turning pretty little speeches and he was also genuinely considerate in a way that was rare in that era, but he could be forthright when the occasion demanded, and, though naturally candid and warm, he would retire—which always amused me—at a suspicion of imposture or imposition, into a skeptical and ironic reserve. He was, I think, the only man I have known of whom it could truly be said that he possessed a Heinesque wit, and I always thought it a pity that his humor, which contributed so much to the pleasure of being with him, should have figured so little in his writing. (Since writing this, however, I have looked into his little book, *An Hour with American Music*, and I see that it is full of wit. It was the humor of exaggeration, to which he sometimes gave rein in his talk, that rarely appears in his work.)

When I got to know Paul better, we sometimes compared notes about our childhood and education. He had gone to school on the Hudson and had afterwards graduated from Yale, and the latter institution, though he seemed to feel a certain respect for it, had rather oppressed him at the time he had been there; but he had been fortunate in being able to escape to spend his summer vacations in Europe. When he had once found out, he told me, that there existed somewhere else an artistic and social and intellectual world larger and more exciting than anything he had known in America, and that he could always go back to it later, he found that he could endure New Haven, to which he was so ill-adapted, without fears of suffocation. He had grown up in uptown New York

in a German-Jewish household, and he had never belonged to any church or been trained in any religion; but he had got from his parents a grounding in the classical German culture, musical and literary. When he went to Europe in summer, he loved to visit a German uncle, who was something of a *bon viveur*. His parents had both died when he was young, and his only close relative was a sister. He never married and, so far as I could see, had no real desire to marry, enjoying the bachelor's life which his moderate means made possible.

His strongest tie was undoubtedly with Stieglitz, toward whom he stood in something like a filial relation; and the group around Stieglitz became for him both family and church. The only traditionally and specifically Jewish trait that ever came, in my intercourse with Paul, as something alien that blocked understanding between us was the quality of his piety toward Stieglitz, whom he accepted and revered as a prophet, unquestioningly obedient to his guidance in the spirit that is sometimes exemplified by the disciples of Freud, Marx, and Trotsky; and his range as a writer on the plastic arts was limited by the exclusiveness of his interest in the work of the Stieglitz group. It was difficult, if not impossible, to persuade him to pay attention to any contemporary American painter who was not a protégé of Stieglitz', and if Stieglitz had excommunicated a refractory or competitive disciple, Paul, following the official directive, would condemn him, not merely as an artist but as a reprobate who had somehow committed an unpardonable moral treason. He had the tone of the old-fashioned brother whose sister has fallen to shame, or the member of a Communist sect reacting to the name of a heretic.

For the rest, his affectionate and generous nature had to spend itself mainly in the sympathy that he brought to the

troubles of his friends and in the tireless encouragement of talent. His judgment here was usually shrewd, his insight often profound; he was tactful and unobtrusive in helping people who needed help, and he did not want thanks in return. His taking the Andersons to Europe is an example that happens to be known of the kind of thing he liked to do, and one has heard of his finding, at a critical time, resources for a now famous composer; but he undoubtedly did more for more people than anyone will ever know. It has remained in my mind that he was present at the deathbed of Randolph Bourne, desperately feeding him with oxygen in the effort to keep him alive. Bourne had been one of the most remarkable of the group that founded the *Seven Arts*. As a hunchback, he was unfit for the services and thus set free to repudiate the war as an able-bodied writer could hardly have done so roundly; and the intellectual light and the moral passion, the mastery of self-expression, that led people to forget his deformity as soon as he began to talk, made his friends of that era feel that he was keeping alive spiritual values that might otherwise have gone by the board. "When he died," Paul wrote, "we knew that perhaps the strongest mind of the entire younger generation in America had gone. . . . We see the size of him plainly in the bitter moments in which we realize how vacant the scene has become in the many fields to which he brought the light of his own clear nature!"

## II

Paul later sold his house at Westport and took a little corner apartment in an old and elevatorless house on the west side of Irving Place. There, however, he continued to flourish. He liked

to give evening parties which were all the more agreeable for being of rather an old-fashioned kind. What was unusual in the dry twenties was that there was very little liquor served: a highball or two or a little punch; and poets read their poetry and composers played their music. One met Ornstein, Milhaud, Varèse; Cummings, Hart Crane, and Marianne Moore; the Stieglitzes and all their group; the Stettheimers, Mumford, Kreymborg. One of the images that remains with me most vividly is the bespectacled figure of Copland, at that period gray-faced and lean, long-nosed and rather unearthly, bending over the piano as he chanted in a high, cold, and passionate voice a poem of Ezra Pound's, for which he had written a setting.

In those days I saw a good deal of Paul in a business as well as a friendly way, for I was working first on *Vanity Fair*, then on the *New Republic*, and Paul wrote a good deal for both. He grew rather stout at this time, and his style betrayed a tendency toward floridity. He felt afterwards, he told me, that his writing—like so many other things during the Boom—had, to its detriment, become somewhat overinflated. My impression is that when people say they do not like Paul Rosenfeld's style, they are thinking of characteristics that only became rampant in some of the work of this period, and that they have no real acquaintance with his criticism either before or after. As an editor, I had sometimes to struggle with him over the locutions and vocabulary of his essays, and I am fully aware of his faults. He had spent so much time in Europe and he read so much French and German that he could never quite keep his English distinct from his other languages, and habitually wrote *ignore* as if it meant the same thing as *ignoror* and *genial* as if it meant possessing genius. He had also a way of placing adverbs

that used to set my teeth on edge, as did some of these adverbs themselves, such as *doubtlessly* and *oftentimes*. There were moments when he *did* overwrite, working himself up into a state of exaltation with romantic Germanic abstractions that sounded a little ridiculous in English. But, going back to his essays today, one is not much bothered by this or even necessarily conscious of it. One finds a body of musical criticism that covers the modern field more completely than one had remembered and that stands up, both as writing and as interpretation, so solidly as to make quite unimportant these minor idiosyncrasies and slips.

There is of course an objection to Paul's writing which is based on disapproval on principle of the romantic and impressionistic school which he enthusiastically represented. In the serious literary journals, a new tone had just been set by T. S. Eliot's *Sacred Wood*, which was spare and terse in style, analytical and logical in treatment. Paul, for lack of any intellectual instrument adapted to dealing with literary ideas (though he was expert at dealing with musical ones), was somewhat less satisfactory—except when writing of certain kinds of poetry that had something in common with music—on the subject of literature than he was on music and painting; but it was very unjust that this fashion should have prejudiced against him the editors of the kind of magazine on which he most depended for a market. The same tendency appeared in the musical world; and the critics—though less, I think, the composers—complained of his lack of scholarship in the technical side of music. To this a writer who is not a musician can only reply that it seems to him that the moment the critic departs from the technical analysis of a score, he is writing impressionistic criticism; and that Berlioz in his essays on Beethoven's sym-

phonies and Debussy when he is putting on record such an opinion as that Edvard Grieg was a marshmallow stuffed with snow are just as much impressionistic critics as Paul Rosenfeld ever was. Berlioz and Debussy, of course, were a great deal more literary and programmatic than the generation of Schönberg and Stravinsky have liked to be thought to be; but I believe that Paul was right in insisting that every valid work of art owes its power to giving expression to some specific human experience and connecting it with some human ideal. For musicians it must of course be profitable to read the kind of score-by-score study that has been made by Albert Berger, for example, of the development of Aaron Copland; but, as a layman who merely listens to music, I do not see that it is easy to dismiss the interpretations given by Paul of the emotional and social content of the more "abstract" modern composers: Schönberg and Stravinsky, Hindemith, Bartók and Berg. It is just here, where the composer invites it least, that Paul's insight most proves his genius.

All these years we talked much of such matters. The kind of writing I did myself aimed at something rather different from his, and he horrified me once by saying that his idea of good prose was something that was laid on like a thick coat of paint; but we had in common a fundamental attitude and invoked a common cultural tradition, which it is easiest to call humanistic. Among the few things that I really look back upon with anything like nostalgia in the confusion and waste of the twenties are such conversations as those with Paul when we would sit in his corner room, beneath his little collection of Hartleys and O'Keeffes and Marins, surrounded by his shelves full of Nietzsche and Wagner, Strindberg, Shaw and Ibsen, Tolstoy and Dostoevsky, Flaubert, Claudel and Proust, Henry



James and Poe, and the English poets that he had read at Yale, or walk back and forth at night between my place and his. He liked New York, was a thorough New Yorker, and—except for a few weeks in the summer when he would visit the Stieglitzes at Lake George and, Georgia O’Keeffe once told me, take the same walk every afternoon, or for an occasional out-of-town lecture or concert—he rarely ventured to leave the city. He did visit the Andersons in Virginia, and once got as far as New Mexico—when Georgia O’Keeffe was there—and even saw an Indian corn dance; but it was difficult to make him take interest in any but the most self-consciously esthetic aspects of American cultural life. I tried again and again to get him to read such writers as Ring Lardner and Mark Twain, but I never had the least success. When I finally resorted to the device of giving him *Huckleberry Finn* as a Christmas present, he obstinately refused to open it, having heard that Henry James had once said of Mark Twain that he wrote for immature minds. I told him one day later on, when the first liveliness of the twenties was spent, that he would not have lived very differently if he had been the leading music critic of Frankfurt, Dresden, or Munich; but he protested at once against this. He could never be so free, he said, in Germany—or anywhere else except New York.

### III

The depression was disastrous for Paul. His income dwindled almost to nothing; and he was forced to give up Irving Place, moving first to a small apartment on Eleventh Street just off Fifth Avenue, then finally to a less accessible one in the far reaches of West Eleventh Street. The *Dial* suspended publica-

tion in 1929; the *New Republic* was in the hands of an editor of whom it might almost be said, as the Nazis said of themselves, that when he heard the word *culture* he reached for his gun. Paul, for the first time in his life, was obliged to resort to real hackwork: little odd jobs and reviews, for which he was not well paid. He developed diabetes and grew thin; and something, I got the impression, went wrong with his personal affairs—though of this I never heard him speak. The staffs and the principal contributors of the *Dial* and the *New Republic*, both non-commercial affairs financed by rich patrons, had been groups of serious writers who had had lunches and dinners together, where plans and current events were discussed, and who had been part of Paul's social life as well as a stimulus to his work. But now, when endowments were drying up, there was a movement toward the political Left, and such groupings and common undertakings as the New York "intellectuals," as they were now always called, continued to go in for in the thirties, were mostly oriented in the direction of Communism. Paul intensely disliked all this, and though one of the great merits of his criticism had been its sure sense of musical personalities as the reflections of their national and social backgrounds, he would indignantly deny at this time that art had anything to do with history. When I argued such questions with him, I found that "the Artist" meant for him a being unique and god-like, and that he would not admit for a minute that a philosopher or a scientist or a statesman could achieve an equal creative importance. On one occasion he was somehow persuaded to attend an election rally held by the Communists in Cooper Union, at which there were to be speeches by writers who had announced that they would vote for the Communists and who paid their homage to Communism as a literary restorative and bracer in

the vein of the new convert to evangelism or the patent medicine testimonial; but, seated in a conspicuous place in one of the front rows, he attracted unfavorable attention by pointedly refusing to rise when the "International" was sung.

I was deep in Left activities myself, but I always continued to see him and occasionally went to concerts with him. If you dined with him in his apartment, he cooked and served the dinner; and the difficulty was, if you ate with him out in one of the Greenwich Village restaurants, ever to pay back his hospitality, as he invariably snatched the check and insisted on settling it himself. Even now that he had no regular platform, he continued to go to concerts and make notes on his impressions of the music he had heard and to put them away in his files; and he continued to look for new talent and to acquire new protégés—though he sometimes had fits of gloom in which he would declare that American music was an abomination of desolation. He was sharply unsympathetic with the tendency of American composers to abandon the abstruse researches into which they had been led by Schönberg, the high seasoning and classicizing and virtuosity of abbreviation characteristic of Stravinsky and others, and to try to produce a music that could be heard and enjoyed by bigger audiences than those of the Composers' League. He was shocked, almost personally hurt, when Americans whose work he had thought promising did anything for the radio or Hollywood or published popular books. He expressed his views on this general subject in his essay on Kurt Weill and *Gebrauchsmusik*, in which he asserted that all music was useful, since "all works of musical art express essences and ideas and thus, with their symbols of the inner truth of life, provide the best of bases of social relationships," and that there was of course no reason why composers

who “deeply felt the spirit of symbols of social rituals” should not provide these rituals with music—so long as the music provided “conveyed an individual interpretation of the meanings of the ritual” and not merely “general and conventional symbols and a sort of collective expression.” He concluded: “Let us by all means have *Gebrauchsmusik*. But let it be the work of artists, not of ‘revolutionary’ academicians.” It will be seen that these considered and formulated views were less severe than his instinctive attitude toward the practice of American composers; and I guessed that this attitude was part of his finding himself now rather out of things and being reluctant to see other artists care anything for popular success.

But it worried me to feel, as time went on, that he was beginning to lose his self-confidence. He had put a good deal of work into the writing of what I took from his descriptions to be a kind of symphonic novel based on a visit he had made to Rome, but he had decided that his whole conception was vitiated by some moral falsity and he withheld it from publication—which seemed to me a morbid symptom. A healthy writer either knows what he is doing or doesn’t discover his error till long after he has published the book. The persecution of the Jews by Hitler came later to weigh upon Paul and to become overpoweringly identified with the difficulties he was facing at fifty. The times had not brought to fulfillment that creative and enlightened era of which they had seemed to be witnessing the dawn when the *Seven Arts* was founded: totalitarian states and class pressures were closing down on the artistic elite. The independent American journalism that had flared up for a while in the twenties had given way to the streamlined commercial kind, and the non-commercial magazines were composed for the most part by this time of second-rate academic papers

and the commentaries of Talmudic Marxists. Even the *New Yorker*, more liberal and literate than most of the new magazines, and in its own way quite independent, was unable to find a place for Paul: it, too, had a conventional style, which sometimes ran to insipidity through the solicitous care of the editors to eliminate anything unexpected in the way that their writers expressed themselves. It was primarily a humorous weekly and had a department that exploited the absurdities that appeared in other papers, so that the *New Yorker* had itself to be always on its guard against writing that might be thought ridiculous. It was one of the most cruel blows of Paul Rosenfeld's later years that the *New Yorker* would not print his articles after asking him, as he assumed, to act as their regular art critic. Paul's prose, as I knew, had its blemishes, but at its best it would have been hopelessly refractory to the *New Yorker* processing mill. There was at that time not a single periodical that would print the work of a writer simply because he knew his subject and wrote about it well. Paul sometimes showed signs of a fear that he had been made the victim of a boycott; and at others was too ready to blame himself. He said to me once that his inheritance from his grandmother had unfitted him to struggle with the world; that he had thrown up his first and only job—as a reporter on a New York paper—simply because he did not need it to live. Certainly he was unfitted for putting himself over or making terms with editors and publishers; no one ever had less sense of business. He never could understand that writing was a commodity like any other, which, from the moment one lacked a patron, had to be sold in a hard-boiled way; and the world came more and more to divide itself for him into two classes, black and white: the negative forces of darkness that were closing down to crush him

and the few pure children of light who survived and could heal and save.

I was distressed by him in these latter days and used to wonder how the circumstances had been combined so that a shift in economic conditions had had the result of undermining so able a man by way of his very virtues even more than by way of his weaknesses. Certainly it was unwise of Paul to have depended as much as he did on the writing of musical criticism. Since he was himself not a musician but a writer, he should not have tied up his talent with the reporting of contemporary concerts. It is impossible for a master of words completely to express himself by merely rendering the effects of some other art; and I have never really understood why Paul did not tackle some bigger subject—a history of American music or a biography of some composer—which would have got him an advance from a publisher and supplied him with a sustaining interest. One might have said the same thing about Huneke; but it is no great comfort to realize that Paul Rosenfeld, in an age which prided itself on its emergence from the Philistinism of Huneke's, should have burned out in much the same way and been left in the same neglect. The burning-out and the public indifference seem somehow to work together. They are an old and depressing story in the American intellectual world.

When I got back to New York from Europe in the autumn of 1945, I spent with Paul a wonderful evening, which, though I may have seen him once or twice afterwards, has left me with a last lively impression that I am extremely glad to have. He was in very much better spirits than he had been during the years of the war. He had received from a foundation a substantial grant to do a book of literary studies; and it seemed to cheer him up to hear talk about Europe again, now that the

war was over and the arts might be expected to revive. I told him about my enthusiasm for Benjamin Britten's opera, *Peter Grimes*, which I had heard that summer in London. And both of us were glad to find someone to whom one could express oneself freely about the current state of letters and art. He was angry over his treatment at the hands of one of the high-brow quarterlies, the editor of which had first asked him to be a member of the advisory board and had then refused to print his articles, keeping them, however, for months without letting him know about them. I had had with this same magazine an almost equally annoying experience; and I managed to make Paul laugh by describing to him an essay in which this portentous editor, in the course of a rigorous analysis of Macbeth's "Out, out, brief candle" speech, conducted in the rigorous spirit of the new "methodological" criticism, had said something like, "We cannot know why Shakespeare has chosen for death the curious adjective *dusty*, but the epithet has a quaint appropriateness that can be felt but hardly explained." We rapidly became so hilarious, abounding so, as Henry James would say, in our own old sense, affirming our convictions so heartily and making such delightful fun of the more tiresome of our contemporaries, that we went on till what was for Paul a late hour, walking the autumn streets and stopping off for coffee and beer at Childs' and the Lafayette, almost as if we had been back in the twenties, with the new era of American art just beginning to burst into life between Macdougall Street and Irving Place. Less than a year later, Paul died of a heart attack as he was coming out of a movie, to which he had gone alone.

And now, despite the miseries of his later years, he remains for me, looking back, one of the only sound features of a land-

scape that is strewn with deformations and wrecks: a being organically moral on whom one could always rely, with a passion for creative art extinguishable only with life. It has worried me to reflect that the rise in morale I thought I had noted in him when I talked to him last was not, after all, to lead to anything, and to remember how unhappy and insecure, how unrewarded he was at the end. There are tragedies of untimely death which—coming at the end of a man's work or breaking off his career at a crisis—represent a kind of fulfillment. But one can find no justice in Paul's. His death had no dramatic appropriateness; nor was it preceded, I fear, by any very steady serenity. It had been obvious, in view of the interest that had been stimulated in American music, partly through Paul's own efforts, and of the quantity of books about music that were now getting into type, that it was time for a reprinting of Paul's criticism; and the suggestion had been made to two publishers that an omnibus be brought out. But he had not had even this gratification. One can only reassure oneself by remembering that the work he had done was of the kind that pays for itself, because it is done for love and brings, in the doing, elevation of spirit. To have had thirty years of such work is not the least enviable of destinies; and his best writing bears on every page his triumph and his justification.

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*DIAL* DAYS

DURING the time that I was connected with the *Dial* magazine as its managing editor, more than twenty years ago, Paul Rosenfeld was a regular contributor to its pages, yet it is not with his gifts as a writer, distinguished and original as these are, that my memories of him are chiefly concerned. Our acquaintance antedated by about nine years my connection with the *Dial*, and it was during this period that I came to value him as a friend. It was Randolph Bourne that first brought us together. He had spoken frequently to me of a delightful and cultured young man called Paul Rosenfeld, and it was finally arranged that I should be taken to his rooms for dinner. I recall my surprise when, after mounting a flight of narrow stairs, I came suddenly into an interior that might have been lifted out of some European capital—Vienna, Paris, Florence—and without disarranging a single picture, or overturning a single vase, set down on the chill, dusty sidewalk of Irving Place, New York. It was an interior both intimate and spacious, an interior for pleasures that were grave and thought that was gay, for conversation witty and civilized. I do not remember any room in America that conveyed to me in so striking a manner the feeling of having been given its atmosphere by a person of taste—a cosmopolitan and an epicure of the art of living.

We are now shy of employing the word gentleman with its

outworn and ambiguous flavor, but if I may be allowed for once to return to the original meaning of this beautiful and much-abused word, to no one could it be more appositely applied than to Paul Rosenfeld. His sympathy was so delicate, his modesty so consistent, his intelligence so illumined and so subtle, and his culture so individual and so wide, and in no conversation that I recall where he took part were those two great foes to civilized intercourse, vanity and competition, in evidence. His generosity though prodigal was always unobtrusive. I remember Gilbert Cannan once remarking to me: "Americans don't know what good manners are," and my replying, "And the English don't know what bad manners are." In both these statements there is a grain of truth. Paul was one that could distinguish with a nicety between the two. He came to typify for me a way of life, something so lamentably lacking and so infinitely precious in our casual and naïve America.

As a host he possessed every virtue and every charm. The conversation could be light without flippancy and deep without self-consciousness or pedantry. The irony was never cruel and the wit never lacking in point. Nothing was forced upon one and nothing was overlooked. The atmosphere was never strained yet it had a tone, a style. He followed the Latin rather than the Anglo-Saxon tradition and made of human intercourse an art. In England I have been to parties where the guests seemed to defend their silence with a pugnacity as invincible as that with which they defend their "sea-girt isles." I remember Paul coming to my rooms at Patchin Place to meet Jules Romains, and our going, all three, to dine at Broad's chophouse. I was struck by some similarity of response in the two men, a response so suspended, so sensitively alert and faintly ironical,

an irony floating on the currents of thought. Paul was, however, in outlook international. He had the French *finesse* and the Teutonic leaning toward large metaphysical abstractions. His mind veered to every fresh wind, whether blowing in from the east or from the west, from across the prairies or from across the Atlantic. It was from his lips that I first heard the name of Marcel Proust, and by him that I was initiated into the genius of this incomparable artist and great original thinker, but if I should try to summon up my debt to him I would hardly know where to begin and where to leave off. A few chance words may sometimes change the course of a lifetime. From our earliest years our senses instruct us that "the race of delight is short," but we seldom take the lesson to heart. Through Paul it was brought home to me as never before that the moment alone exists, a point still warmly disputed by philosophers, but as Paul Valéry writes, *Cela qui n'existe pas dure une seconde*, and it is just this second that counts. I remember the very place, at the corner of Fifth Avenue and Tenth Street, when, as we stood waiting for a taxi, because of some special stress he gave the words, some expression faintly mocking and essentially serious that flickered across his features, it came to me with a new deep conviction imaginatively grasped that what he was telling me was true and exhilarating. This was not to say that this magical second was to be in any sense squandered. On the contrary, it was to be forced to hold, without conscience or remorse, every single drop it could possibly contain; a dangerous doctrine undoubtedly for someone less finely tempered than was he. Intelligent women of my generation were, however, largely obsessed with a sense of moral obligation and it was strangely liberating to have it all swept away on a gesture of adventurous life-acceptance.

I met many composers and musicians in Paul's rooms, and he used frequently to take me to symphony concerts where his darting, sidelong glances were a whole unparalleled volume of intensities and illuminations. On warm spring evenings he would call for me at Milligan Place and take me in a gay, shabby Victoria—like a Paris *fiacre*—with an antiquated coachman snapping an antiquated whip over the shanks of an antiquated horse, up the wide deserted asphalt of Fifth Avenue, lighted by electric globes hanging like clusters of pendent moonstones. We would go into Central Park where the leaves rustled and turned in the faint breeze and I would feel as if I were living in the pages of a Balzac novel. Sometimes we would have a *café mousse* or a *pêche Melba* at the Café Lafayette before I returned, my head light, to my dusty alley. When he spent his summers in Westport, Connecticut, I often drove over to see him from my parents' home in Norwalk, and would remain for the night in his delightful home where he brought the same taste, the same tact, and the same enlivening conversation.

In the early days of our acquaintance Randolph Bourne used to be the center of a circle that would gather in my rooms at Milligan Place to discuss the ideas of the hour—books, art, scandal, psychology, education, who was up and who down, editors, the suffrage movement, the Russian ballet, the academic mind, the foreign populations, the follies of woman and the perfidies of man, nationalism, socialism, anarchism—little was scanted. Paul's presence always lent charm to these occasions. He was not a brilliant talker. His thought was too diffuse and too evasive, his perceptions quicker than he could find words to convey them, though at all times he was capable of saying things witty and wise. If he had no easy flow of eloquent

discourse he had the quality of receptivity that holds itself in constant readiness to understand, and that brings out the best in others:

A jest's prosperity lies in the ear  
Of him that hears it, never in the tongue  
Of him that makes it.

His power of discovering talent where talent would seem least to display itself amounted almost to a magician's trick. His own rich mind spread its bounties over the most barren fields and gave luster to every sprouting weed.

About his own writing he was excessively sensitive. When I was associated with the *Dial* it was our editorial policy never to make corrections or alterations in the work of our contributors, but if we found some passage too obscure for our understanding, some punctuation that confused the sense, some error in grammar, to call it to the attention of the author and get his advice. To approach Paul on such nervous subjects required the utmost diplomacy and was apt to create a momentary strain. Authors vary widely in these matters. There are some that would lay down a golden sovereign for every honest criticism, while others would rather have a finger lanced than to see a single comma queried. It was always a particular pleasure to greet Paul when he arrived at the *Dial* with his monthly "Musical Chronicle," usually just in time for it to be sent to press. He brought gaiety in with him. Though not tall and far from slim, he moved with a deftness that amounted almost to a kind of grace. His step was light and the glance from his expressive eyes that I remember as chestnut in color—but how erroneous our memories are apt to be!—was light, and he could catch, in the matter of glances, everything there was to catch and a great deal more besides.

It was perhaps fitting that our last meeting should have been in Rome where he acted as cicerone to my husband—Llewelyn Powys—and me during our visit to that city. Here his gifts as host and as a connoisseur of the arts found their natural expression, and before each sight—the piazzas and arches and columns, the Pantheon and Colosseum, the little cemetery where the bones of Keats lie buried, the Pietà in St. Peter's, the Appian Way, “the Tiber hurrying along, as swift and dirty as history,” the flower stalls at the Piazza di Spagna, he had some word to quicken our imaginations and enlarge our understanding. To this day I associate that enchanted pilgrimage with his figure, and with the expression I caught in his eyes when, as a kind of crowning triumph to the hours, he led us through the doors of S. Pietro in Vincoli up to Michelangelo's statue of Moses.

As to his contribution to the cultural life of his time, others have written, and will write more ably than I on this important subject. I know he encouraged unceasingly the talents of obscure young writers, artists, and composers, whether native-grown or from abroad. When Gilbert Cannan was in America and was trying to raise a fund to send D. H. Lawrence to New Mexico or Arizona, Paul, aside from his own generous offering, was indefatigable in his efforts to be of service. My long residence in Europe has severed me to a large extent from the recent intellectual trends in my own exciting country. I might stand, I fear, as an almost perfect example of Mr. Van Wyck Brooks' most unfavorable comments on the American *déraciné*. I am, I think I may say, that prodigy, melancholy and exempt, a true internationalist. It is, therefore, to what Paul Rosenfeld possessed in common with the most civilized traditions in all countries of the world, at all times in history, that I place

this wreath to his memory—to his gentleness, his consideration, his courtesy, good taste, enlightened understanding, and to some enduring quality of the heart that was always uniquely his own.

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*Alfred Kreymborg*

## THE CARAVAN VENTURE

ONE SUMMER, about twenty-two years ago, while we were the guests of Alfred Stieglitz at Lake George, Paul Rosenfeld and I had nightly discussions about the state of American literature, and he was dismal concerning the absence of a purely esthetic magazine. Pioneer ventures like the *Seven Arts* and the *Freeman*, in which he had played an energetic role, and of *Others* and *Broom*, in which I had played a quiet hand, and the madcap *Little Review* which had sailed around the globe in feminine garments, had expired, \* and recognition of genuine authors, especially the young, had lapsed again. The top old-line monthlies, the *Atlantic*, *Harper's*, and *Scribner's*, had remained unaffected by the new currents in our letters and held out little hope for the latest aspirants, unless they conformed to editorial desks rigid against all novelty and solely hospitable

\* [Actually the *Little Review* did not expire until Winter, 1927.—Editors' note.]

to standardized brands of fiction, essays, and bits of verse good enough to appeal to popular taste. Except for a small segment of devotees, artistic ventures were never popular with the American public, and the question always arose as to whether they would raise an audience large enough for financial support, a story that seems to repeat itself ad infinitum. The *Seven Arts*, to be sure, had collapsed because of a break in policies between the politically minded editors, who opposed America's entry into the first World War, and their financial sponsor, who insisted on carrying out an esthetic program. And the *Dial* was already imperiled because of a growing annual deficit its generous owners and editors could no longer afford. *Others*, *Broom*, and the *Little Review* were strictly financial casualties.

During that summer on The Hill, as Stieglitz' acres were called, this country was at the height of a postwar Boom-or-Bust cycle which would soon paralyze American capital on the one hand and the American spirit on the other with the greatest depression in its history. Men who had any money to spare for creative dreams would have had to be reckless to spend it on experimental magazines, even by subscribing but a few dollars annually. Nonetheless, in a country surrounded by an implacable materialism subject to the gambling of blind financiers and political jugglers, the creative spirit is a hardy perennial, and one had only to eye Nature's evergreens to realize how far human nature may persist in the toughest soil. In the reviving ground and atmosphere of The Hill, however, the doughty Stieglitz himself was quite as dismal as Paul Rosenfeld in viewing the strewn hopes of American art as a whole and in demanding at each of our nightly sessions that something drastic be undertaken against conditions hounding all dreamers alike.



It must be confessed that an urgent desire for a new magazine did not receive an immediate response from myself. I had given so many years to editorial activities that my own work and income suffered relapses. I finally proposed that such a venture might prove feasible if it appeared not once a month or in quarterly issues, but only once a year on a book-length scale. It was then determined that a yearbook similar to nineteenth century yearbooks would allow ample time for editors to gather, select, and issue a collection representative of contemporary American literature. But the two prospective editors were not content with themselves as absolute judges of the modern movement, and therefore invited two other pioneering minds to act in similar roles, Van Wyck Brooks and Lewis Mumford, both of whom accepted in letters of hearty endorsement. Brooks, however, was ill at the time and could not attend regular meetings, if and when they matured. Yet we carried his name on the opening *Caravan* because of the inspiration his impassioned nature had provided on many occasions. Mumford was a perfect collaborator on the strength of his ardent imagination and intelligence, together with his command of architectural plans for ideal communities. Quite a few years younger than Rosenfeld and myself, our gifted colleague had long been considered an exhilarating personality in the generation emerging just after the first World War.

Now, where did we find financial backing for this weighty dream of ours, since the book would weigh and cost a good deal more than the average volume? Oddly enough, we found our prospective "angel" right there in Lake George Village: the born New Yorker, Samuel Ornitz, author of the East Side saga, *Haunch, Paunch and Jowl*, and literary editor of the Macaulay Company. Thanks to the coincidence that Ornitz

and I had both been published by Horace Liveright and had begun our friendship on the camaraderie that fantastic sportsman encouraged among his authors, Ornitz had brought himself and family to Lake George to be near his latest crony. Informed of the *Caravan* project, he suggested the unlikely notion that the Macaulay Company was just the firm to sponsor the yearbook. I was frankly skeptical in view of their devotion to pot-boiling novels, lurid biographies, and mystery thrillers. Ornitz removed all doubt by stating that he had been hired for the special purpose of raising the Macaulay standard with occasional works of literature. Delighted with the new idea, he got in touch with the president, L. S. Furman. Contracts were signed in the early fall, hopeful cocktails consumed, and the editors assigned to a room of their own on Fourth Avenue. The idea had no name at the outset. Many titles had been suggested and rejected by each of the editors, by mail, over the phone, and at sporadic meetings. It was Rosenfeld who hit upon *The American Caravan*, a title hailed by the two other "camels" and by the absent Brooks. And Mumford composed the trenchant manifesto inviting authors, known or unknown, to send in their manuscripts. Although the venture languished after the fifth issue in 1936, part of its name was carried by ventures in other fields: *The Negro Caravan*, *Ballet Caravan*, *Caravan Theatre*, *Caravan Night Club*, et cetera.

Editorial meetings were held every Saturday afternoon at Rosenfeld's quiet apartment in Greenwich Village. I didn't have far to walk, but Mumford had to journey from Sunnyside Village in Queensboro, laden like myself with stories, plays, poems, and essays from various parts of the country. Rosenfeld's load was added to ours in general discussions after luncheon. After each meeting, each load was transferred from

editor to editor for private readings and comments. Further loads grew heavier and ever more urgent, especially from the realm of unknown or comparatively unknown authors. To simplify the initial process of editorial judgments, manuscripts were marked 1, 2, 3, or X. The first mark indicated tentative acceptance, the second further consideration, the third an encouraging letter asking an author for further material; X marked the spot of rejection. Early in our career we discovered how difficult final choices would be, since the average manuscript surpassed our expectations. We were also receiving, usually at our own request, manuscripts from established authors; yet we never accepted one because of an author's reputation. As a rule the works of unestablished authors proved more engaging, and when we had to decide between a known and an unknown name the choice was usually made in the latter's favor. Final decisions had to be fairly unanimous despite contradictions in the individual tastes. The meetings were remarkable for their impartiality and differences argued out with the utmost warmth in the interests of a common enterprise. As the editors parted at Rosenfeld's door until the following Saturday, they were thoroughly exhausted. Yet never shall I forget his parting glance and strenuous handshake.

Such fellowship was often threatened by an eager author who relied on his acquaintance with one of the editors to sway the others in his behalf. Acquaintance began after a letter the author received from that editor inviting him to a conference over some budding manuscript. Such meetings were held under the full knowledge of the editor's colleagues, and one had to guard against committing oneself to private opinions. One couldn't say, for example, "I liked your story, but the others didn't somehow." Some of these authors, young or old, had

grown wily in drawing forth reactions more substantial than a mere discussion of a story's imperfections. The editors therefore formed the habit of inviting problematic authors to occasional Saturday luncheons for a general discussion. At times they turned wily themselves in trying to induce some elusive and greatly admired writer to contribute to the *Caravan*. Quite a few luncheons were required in the course of several years to win over the shy Southerner, Katherine Anne Porter. This statement is no reflection on that beautiful artist, but praise of a being who took long periods of time to perfect a manuscript. Her integrity was unimpeachable.

The problem of handling Robert Frost was even more difficult, and it fell to me as an old friend to handle the opening round. I knew from experience how well-nigh impossible it was to induce that quizzical Yankee to send a poem for publication. Like the younger Miss Porter, he never rushed into print and at times was still revising a poem begun years ago. Happily, Frost was in New York one day—a place he hated more than any other on earth—and Rosenfeld, learning of his arrival, suggested that I invite him, not to one of our luncheons, but to a regal Christmas Eve dinner at Luchow's. The poet had never met my radiant colleagues but, after some argument over the phone, consented to Rosenfeld's invitation. That generous soul had engaged a table underneath the gigantic electrical tree at Luchow's and there sat the Yankee blinking like a lost soul. He was somewhat mollified by the well-roasted turkey the waiters brought in. But not even the golden Pilsener could induce him to talk, and I was chagrined in the light of advance information I had given my colleagues as to the poet's genius for improvisation. We had to resign ourselves to do our own talking. Mumford and Rosenfeld, masters at the art of con-

versation, began a brilliant tour of anecdotes, without once mentioning the desired manuscript. They ranged the world of life through the world of letters with a wealth of appropriate quotations. Robert Frost's quixotic mood began to thaw but still the old devil didn't speak. It was obvious to an old friend that he was enjoying himself, and when the evening closed, with each of us equally worn out, the poet thanked Rosenfeld for his hospitality and then went off with me to the nearest subway station. Still he said nothing until we reached the entrance. Then he chuckled, turned to me, and observed drily: "Jesus, Alfred, those fellows have read a lot of books!" Not long afterward, however, he sent us the manuscript of his poem, "The Walker."

This parting shot had quasi-accurate connotations. Rosenfeld and Mumford were indeed cultivated. But their cultivation, which ranged all ages without neglecting our own, was a living essence that embraced life first and last as the source of creative power. Along with Van Wyck Brooks, they expressed themselves in works of criticism; yet behind their effort one felt the approach of artists toward esthetic and moral concerns. Each was a poet by nature if not by profession, and it was this character that always loomed in my relations with them. And they got down to earth with their problems, unlike the average critic or criticaster. Never shall I forget, nor will Mumford, I'm certain, how Rosenfeld, with his tragic concern for our fellow camels, got down on the floor and crawled among the many leaves awaiting final decision on Judgment Day. And we would be judged by our judgment as well! There lay the manuscripts in various sizes, shapes, and colors, some of them six months old in their impatience, for they looked like human beings now without an advocate to attend their trials and sen-

tences. Those already accepted stood in a neat pile, those still to be debated in larger piles or scattered about like a field of wild flowers. And Rosenfeld would rise to his knees, some manuscript in hand, to plead once more for this favorite, to which, being human, Mumford and I responded by pleading for some favorite of our own. In the long run, the editors decided that each could choose one of his annual weaklings. Votes on all the manuscripts must be unanimous.

The *Caravan* editors were tied down by space limitations, even though the Macaulay Company had been remarkably generous. And they never interfered with our freedom of choice, though Lee Furman often trembled regarding what his printers might say against "indecent authors." The first issue would extend to at least nine hundred pages, solidly packed with an average of about five hundred words per page. It is impossible to describe how often we had to estimate the actual number of words in a given manuscript, with the repeated question, "Will this thing fit in or not?" Yet the race between still acceptable manuscripts ran so close, and the need so keen of returning worthy material, as to badger the editors over and over, with the man on the floor our leader in actual suffering. And we all suffered together in our inability to find one cheerful or fairly cheerful composition in that mass of paper. These authors were true to their tragic experience, and we had to be true in turn. Paradoxically, our private natures, bred on the romantic period, had to sit in judgment over a generation of men and women virtually new to our experience. We welcomed them nonetheless as ardently as we had welcomed our own generation. Our opening *Caravan* received a surprising welcome from still another quarter: it was accepted by the Literary Guild whose membership at the time was nearing 30,000. The Guild's divi-

dends were divided on a pro rata basis among our enraptured dromedaries. And that issue was headline news among the literary courts of America.

Paradoxically again, reviewers and authors got the impression that we were publishing only the things we were looking for, and praised or abused the editors for introducing "the *Caravan* style." Literary agents henceforth mailed stories and poems straight to our office because they were even gloomier than our first production. And one young publisher, Maxim Lieber, dropped the publishing business and established a flourishing agency based on "*Caravan* authors." And still the editors went around with an expectant air, searching again and again for promising material, and often at the cost of writing their own. This self-effacing crusade, which made its bow in 1927, proceeded into 1928, 1929, and 1931. Then, after a lapse of five years, it was revived under the scholarly house of W. W. Norton and met with financial failure that closed the venture. One of our last editorial acts, heartily disapproved at the time, was the rejection of a novelette by Thomas Wolfe, a careless work unworthy of that ascending talent. Meanwhile, the *American Caravan* has had a noble successor in the *Cross Section* annuals edited by the single-handed Edwin Seaver. The issues I have read make its unhappy parent seem like a sunbeam by comparison.

The list of authors who made their bow in our venture, or were accepted while they were still fairly unknown, is too long for full inclusion here. I shall therefore submit a partial list: Nathan Asch, Kay Boyle, Erskine Caldwell, Morley Callaghan, Robert Cantwell, Paul Corey, Hart Crane, William Faulkner, Virgil Geddes, Wallace Gould, Horace Gregory, Albert Halper, Josephine Herbst, John Herrmann, Raymond Holden,

Paul Horgan, Louis Kronenberger, Margery Latimer, Jonathan Leonard, Meridel Le Sueur, Janet Lewis, Vincent McHugh, Kenneth Patchen, Katherine Anne Porter, Phelps Putnam, Muriel Rukeyser, Lyle Saxon, Delmore Schwartz, Philip Stevenson, Jean Toomer, Robert Penn Warren, Richard Wright. Most of these poets, dramatists, and prose-writers have achieved maturity since and have reached a wider audience through regular publishing channels. The *American Caravan* was not only an earnest dream but a practical demonstration of what may happen when dreamers bend their undying faith to realities.

Now for a word of summation about Paul Rosenfeld. Among his persistent virtues, the one that comes first to mind was his quality as an audience, public or private. I have never known any man more deeply concerned in what he was listening to at a given hour, whether music, poetry, or theater, or to what you were saying on a long walk. He gave himself completely to the other man and often prompted thoughts his companion hadn't even entertained. This was particularly true if the dialogue touched upon works in progress. Rosenfeld always belittled his own work or brushed it aside with questions about your own. As Aaron Copland observed during a radio broadcast, "Paul Rosenfeld was a music-lover first and a critic afterward."

I've seen him rise out of the worst doldrums—and he had the doldrums often—as soon as he met you somewhere and inquired after your health and what you were doing. He was absolutely unfailing in this connection. And where other listeners faded away at some modern American concert they were bored with or could not fathom, he would sit through to the end, still



waiting for something worthy of recognition. Composers have told me that the advancement of American music on a broader critical base was due almost entirely to this one man. Rosenfeld often invited them to play for him at his home, and there composer and friend went over score after score as though the friend had composed them. Poets enjoyed a similar privilege, as I can attest from numerous readings I was called upon to give for an audience that was almost divine in its penetrating interest. He always looked so refreshed after one of these sessions that you went home heartened enough to continue your hellish trials. His memory was so phenomenal regarding the works of others that, in the course of a long walk, a subject might emerge that required some quotation to nail it fast. And he would bashfully recite some line you immediately hailed as "wonderful." Then you would add, "Where does that come from, Paul?"

"You wrote it yourself!"

Rosenfeld was not popular with the critical fraternity, nor was he ever invited to conduct a column in the metropolitan press, a job whose daily or nightly deadline would have interfered with the time he needed to write and rewrite any paper. Hostile critics declared that his style was "involved." This was true to some extent because of his conscientious mania for saying everything possible about any performance he cherished, however polyphonic the language he employed. His first drafts—like his ardent letters—had an impassioned drive and unaffected simplicity. Yet so uncertain was he of any composition, whether first draft or last, and so exacting the demands on himself, that he sat down in further drudgery to unravel his private octopus. He was, as I have implied, a poet by nature. The saddest thing about his sudden death, shortly after the death of Alfred

Stieglitz, was the feeling we all had that our old friend had not yet completely mastered his natural gifts, nor received the recognition he deserved.

The last time I saw Paul Rosenfeld was about three years ago. He seemed very low in spirit, as we all did during the second World War, whose disasters affected our peaceful behavior. He immediately began the same inquiries of yore and flushed with pleasure when he learned that milady and I were quite well and working away. I had to hurry home for dinner, while he had another engagement, but we promised each other an old reunion soon. That reunion never took place. But in remembrance—the air still breathes with old Paul; and, energetic as he was at the crack of dawn, especially in the days of the *Caravan*, one can still hear the telephone ring and a resonant voice calling, “Hello! Have you read that wonderful story by . . .”

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*Marianne Moore*

## A SON OF IMAGINATION

PAUL ROSENFELD was an artist. In his performances one finds “a level of reality deeper than that upon which they were launched”; his experiences have not been “made by fear to conform with preconceived theories.” Now to be thus “strong in

oneself is to be strong in one's relationships. Give and take is effected, that feeds the powers"; powers that have afforded us "a great panorama of conclusions upon the contemporary scene"; a "miscellaneousness" of acknowledgment that baffles enumeration. The mind which has harbored this greater than greatest Noah's ark of acknowledgments was characterized by an early compliment to it in the *Nation* as "courageous, clear, and biased."

Biased? Biased by imagination; and the artist biased by imagination is a poet, as we see in Paul Rosenfeld's mechanics of verbal invention. Mass epithet would not do; sensibility fevered the noun or the adjective. John Marin was "a timothy among the grasses"; *The Enormous Room* had "a brindled style"; "love and aversion" were "darts of light on a stilly flowing stream, wave-caps cast up and annihilated again by a silently rolling ocean."

Matching the ardor of the method, there was in Paul Rosenfeld a republicanism of respect for that *ignis fatuus*, liberty; a vision of spiritual fitness without visa; of "inner healing" for white America's black victims, those "splintered souls" whose "elasticity of young rubber is weakened and threatened and torn, in bodies of young girls become self-centered and men playing in vaudeville theatres." Though a bachelor, Paul Rosenfeld was not inimical to woman, as Margaret Naumburg, Gertrude Stein, my timid self, and many another might well have testified ere 1946. He even understood children, their "infantine works and little houses"; their way of "cooking a meal without friction of personalities," since "the end irradiates the means."

The artist is no "lily-leaning wistful willowy waning sentimentalist," but "a man of stomach," producing "hard form

which reveals itself the larger the more it is heard." "Heard" suggests music, and in this regard there is an Amazon to explore; an Amazon that was a river, flowing and branching throughout a continent. It was without "axes to grind and sadism to exhaust."

In objectifying what poets, critics, novelists, educators, painters, photographers, sculptors had "given" him, Paul Rosenfeld exemplified most touchingly his conviction that possession involves responsibility. He toiled to benefit his benefactors; or to put it exactly, to benefit benefaction; to justify justice. It is not merely D. H. Lawrence, E. E. Cummings, Gaston Lachaise, Nodier, El Greco, Marsden Hartley, Mozart, or Stravinsky, to whom he was grateful, but to sculpture, painting, writing, music.

Nor was critical rectitude in Paul Rosenfeld something apart from supposedly more prosaic manifestations of conscience. "Michelangelo," he said, "does not stand entirely besmirched for having ceased work on the Medici tombs in order to fortify Florence against brutal Emperor and treacherous Pope." Paul Rosenfeld cared what becomes of us. "America," he said, "must learn to subordinate itself to a religious feeling, a sense of the whole life, or be dragged down into the slime."

Flamboyant generalities are the refuge of the lazy, things that sound well, but in this instance *are* well. Paul Rosenfeld, in his impassioned and varied books, was a poet. He was a scientist of music; a musician; the rescuer of Tristan and Iseult from the half-scholarship of judicious translating; "contented," "refreshed," "rejoicing," "gladdened" by his multifariousness of gratitude—a figure best praised by his own myriad chivalries, drudgeries, and masteries. When everything has its price, and more than price, and anyone is venal, what

a thing is the interested mind with the disinterested motive. Here it is. We have had it in Paul Rosenfeld, a son of consolation, a son of imagination, the man of deeds.

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*Lewis Mumford*

## LYRIC WISDOM

"IT IS ONE of the immediate tasks of our age, don't you agree? either to make knowledge lyrical and saltatory, or to make lyricism wise?" So Paul Rosenfeld wrote in a letter dated July 5, 1930. The problems a man finds in his age, the answers he demands, are usually the problems he finds in his own life and the answers he himself seeks to give. This is particularly true, perhaps, of those who understand the organic connections between themselves and their society. When I look back upon Paul Rosenfeld's life, I see how well he fulfilled, first and last, his self-imposed task: he made lyricism wise.

This is my mature judgment about Rosenfeld, and I came to it slowly; for I was more conscious of his sensitiveness, his eager receptivity, his urgent and insatiable quest for the moment of esthetic creation—as if, by surprising the artist at work, he might unlock the mysteries of life itself—than I was of his more fundamental wisdom. His responsiveness to the arts made him a little too thin-skinned to deal with the coarser

events of life: at times he would respond with a pout, close to anger or tears, to some minor miscarriage of his intentions, thus seeming to me to lack the self-knowledge and the self-discipline one associates with wisdom. But that was a superficial judgment. The final impression he made upon me, an impression deepened by many years of work and intercourse together, was that he was a wise man, richer in the gifts of maturity than most of his contemporaries.

It is of Rosenfeld's wisdom, as reflected in his work and his letters and his human relations, that I purpose here to write; for, with all our present wealth of scientific knowledge and meticulous scholarship, it is wisdom that fails us. For lack of wisdom, much of our criticism rejects the life-giving kernel of art and carefully pulverizes and refines the necessary but arid husks. But for Rosenfeld, esthetics was what Dallas had called it almost a century ago, the "Gay Science": the act of sharing and understanding and joy, an act of the same texture and form as esthetic creation itself. The concept of "creative criticism," which J. E. Spingarn had forged as a weapon against the academic critics, was in its fullest sense the art that Rosenfeld practiced. He taught his contemporaries to love before they dared to judge; or, rather, that is what his practice taught if they were capable of learning Rosenfeld's lesson.

What comes to me now, as the very essence of Rosenfeld's life and work, is a sense of pervading health, benign, ardent, life-bestowing, a sense that is as visible in his essays as it was in direct personal intercourse. Even when the tides of vitality ebbed from him, as they alas! began to do during the final half-dozen years of his life, he did not transfer his anxieties or doubts to the objects of his life, the arts themselves. He respected Melville's noble injunction:

Though light forsake thee, never fall  
From fealty to light.

Before he died, Rosenfeld found himself rejected or deserted by most of the younger generation whose best works he had done so much to make possible; many of them, indeed, scarce knew of his existence. By the same token, and in an even more cruel way—for the neglect and rebellion of the young is often a necessary accompaniment to their own growth—he found himself undervalued, I think, by many of his immediate contemporaries, even those who had once been his close comrades in letters. But time had taught Rosenfeld humility: he scrutinized with an unsparing eye his own achievements, and did not temper the severity of his self-judgment even when he knew that his gifts were superior to those of the editors and writers who had so little use for his work. I know no other critic in our time who has approached the creations of other artists with so little envy and with so much love.

Rosenfeld died at the beginning of a new cycle of literary activity, a period of concentration on the problem of literary genres; and I have no doubt that he would have brought to this long-abandoned theme new perceptions and insights. His life was far from over when death overtook him; but his early expansiveness had contracted a little and the currents of his thought and feeling turned inward. Better than most Christians, he understood the essence of Christianity, and, had he lived, he might have taught his contemporaries anew the values of the inner life and, in nontheological terms, the religion of love.

I must have met Paul Rosenfeld around 1919 or early 1920. By 1921 he knew me at least well enough to recommend me for a summer teaching post at Mrs. Johnson's Peterborough

School, where I succeeded Padraic Colum. Perhaps we met while I was still an associate editor of the fortnightly *Dial*; but the meeting was so casual, and our friendship built up so slowly, that I cannot recall the moment when we first set eyes on each other. Whenever it was, I was already familiar with his work. His contributions to the *Seven Arts* had already established him for me as one of the leaders of the new literary movement in America; and in the realignment of the generations which took place in the 1920's I found myself by education and natural sympathy on the side of men like Randolph Bourne, Waldo Frank, Van Wyck Brooks, Lee Simonson, and Rosenfeld, who were four to ten years my senior, rather than with people like Edmund Wilson, Scott Fitzgerald, Dos Passos, Hemingway, or E. E. Cummings, those disillusioned romantics who came forth presently as the lost leaders of a lost generation.

The older group of men fiercely rejected the cherished idols of middle-class America, the very America that had sought to direct their footsteps from the storm-swept beach of contemporary life to the elevated boardwalk of respectability. They challenged the sordid, mechanistic, venal, hypocritical life that underlay the tepid spiritual manifestations of the genteel tradition. Despite their rejections they were, in the main, deeply affirmative personalities, full of generous hopes for the new American promise and the new American dream, a new dream which both continued and denied the old one, for it demanded spiritual rather than physical adventure, and, turning away from the diverse preoccupations of the puritan and the pioneer, it sought more large and lusty and loving manifestations of life, to use the very adjectives Whitman himself had uttered in his *Song of Myself*.

The mission these men had begun to perform in the *Seven*



*Arts* was to clear away the Victorian rubbish and bric-a-brac, to pull down the dusty academic hangings that prevented the sunlight from reaching our American interiors, and to open the souls of the young, including themselves, to the daylight, the fresh air, and the beckoning world outside. They were true grandsons of Emerson and Whitman, even when they pulled the elder prophets' beards or tweaked their noses. These new writers might be as negative toward our past as Van Wyck Brooks had been in *America's Coming of Age*, because they found so much of what had currently been regarded as important and valuable to be "unusable." But they were not negative toward the future: *Our America*, as Waldo Frank described it, was again in the midst of spiritual birth-throes; and though they still belonged to the generation that traveled freely between America and Europe, and were as much at home in London, Paris, Dresden, or Rome as in New York, their roots were embedded in American soil, and they were not in danger of becoming either isolationist or expatriate.

A whole age seemed to separate these men of the *Seven Arts* from their immediate successors; for the first World War created not so much a dividing line as an abyss between the generations. No matter what the hardships, frustrations, or anxieties of Rosenfeld's generation might be, they never shared the bitter disillusion of the younger literary group. The latter boasted many gallant youths who had volunteered promptly, indeed sometimes quixotically, for ambulance service or officers' training before the United States entered the first World War: the still unsullied image of Rupert Brooke hovered before them. But the war in its grim impersonal beastliness had been too much for many of them, and their recoil from it took the form of a general disillusion with life itself and a rejection of

funded values which men like Rosenfeld, far less involved in the war, still retained. The younger group shrank from their original faith with the bawling outrage of an infant who finds that the lovely golden ball he has grasped is a hot electric bulb. If that was life, they wanted to forget about it. The *Seven Arts* group, coming together when a new world was being conceived through the embrace of the esthetic and the social, so long held apart in American life, escaped the premature disillusion of their juniors. Men like Rosenfeld had been formed by the more stable and hopeful century that preceded the outbreak of our present Time of Troubles; and they had an inner sense of buoyancy which kept them afloat. These men still had the taste of morning in their mouths: the morning before, not the morning after.

In literature, in music, in painting, to say nothing of photography, Rosenfeld's generation had participated in our second great *Aufklärung*: indeed, their cockcrows in the *Seven Arts* were part of the new dawn, as those of Emerson and Thoreau in the original *Dial* had been, almost a century before. These young men—they were all still under thirty-five in 1920—were glad to be alive in this new America, and the fact that they had a fight on their hands with the older generation did not diminish their gladness. They might be savage, savage to the point of downright injustice, in the way they treated the criticism of a Royal Cortissoz, an Irving Babbitt, or a Paul Elmer More; but they behaved in this fashion because they felt, not altogether incorrectly, that these men were not merely combating the trivial, the ephemeral, the half-baked, but that they were opposed, in the name of good taste or correct morals, to every positive manifestation of vitality: that they applied their academic pruning shears, not to guide growth that had already

started, but to curb growth of any kind, lest its exuberant life-burstingness should prove dangerous to the position of the propertied classes—indeed, almost preferring the shears themselves to the living form that they regulated.

The *Seven Arts* group declared themselves against a puritanism that had become a mere nagging DON'T; they were against the servile colonialism and museum worship of the newly rich, with its counterparts in our whole academic life. Did not Barrett Wendell, one of the few professors who dared expound American literature, nullify the effect of his courage here by failing dismally to appreciate the more robust achievements of this literature, leaving the truly great ones, the Melvilles and the Whitmans, out of the picture? Finally, these young men were against the cult of economic success, the brazen gods of the go-getter and the he-man; and they listened with their ears eagerly cocked to the new voices that were making themselves heard, from 1912 on, all over America, to the strident yawp of Sandburg, the tinkling minuet of Kreymborg, the grave cello of Edwin Arlington Robinson; with eager palates they sampled the wild apple tartness of Robert Frost or the sweet butternut bitterness of Edgar Lee Masters' *Spoon River Anthology*. They hailed the new music of Leo Ornstein, Ernest Bloch, Carl Ruggles, and their successors, learned from "291" and the Armory Show the use of new symbols and new techniques of expression, and through their contemporary appreciation for the works of Alfred Maurer, John Marin, and Georgia O'Keeffe, they approached with new insight the neglected American masters like Ryder and Eakins. (Possibly Rosenfeld's best essay on painting is the appreciation of Ryder he published in the *Dial*.)

Much might be said of this original *Seven Arts* group and of

their influence upon Rosenfeld: still more of their influence upon American literature. But perhaps no one else could have told the story or appraised these varied influences so well as Rosenfeld himself. He was aware of this fact: the idea of writing an autobiography was already present as a possibility in his mind in the early thirties, as a letter to me testifies. Partly through his own self-promptings, partly perhaps through my special urgings and confirmations, he finally decided, by the end of 1942, to write a book focused directly on the *Seven Arts* period, if he could get a publisher to tide him through the job with a reasonable advance. Misinformed by a newspaper announcement of a Knopf contest, he drafted 20,000 words of such a book and offered it as a specimen of his work in this contest; but Mr. Knopf and the other publishers Rosenfeld approached turned his plan down. One can only regret the blindness of this "practical judgment," for this was the book of all books for Rosenfeld to have written: no one alive could have given a fuller account, from the inside, of this formative moment in American literature, with a more intelligent perception of both talent and character, or with more of a novelist's skill in recreating the scene itself. The acceptance of that book was a moral obligation to American letters; but no publisher, in those fat days of publishing, felt called upon to fulfill that obligation. Finding so little sympathy or interest in the places where he naturally looked first, Rosenfeld probably did not pursue the hunt with a beginner's tenacity: so a very valuable part of the tale will forever remain untold.

Of this original *Seven Arts* group Paul Rosenfeld was not perhaps the most vigorous or original spirit; certainly he was not, immediately, the most influential. Van Wyck Brooks had a greater part to play in awakening a sense of curiosity and

responsibility about our American past; Waldo Frank, through his criticism and interpretation as well as through his novels, gained a far wider international reputation; Randolph Bourne, with only a few frail posthumously collected volumes to sustain him—if one forgets his essay on the Gary school system—left a sharper image on the mind of his immediate contemporaries; and all these men, like their original leader, James Oppenheim, were more at home than Rosenfeld in the worlds of politics and economics, were more sympathetically aroused and impelled by the cause of labor, by the search for a more just and creative social order that would fulfill the promise of the democratic ideal. But of all these good men, Rosenfeld was the most generous and outgoing to all the new manifestations in the arts: the readiest to search the sand and grit, laboriously, for the sake of the grain or two of gold he might bring to light, the most ready to submerge his own identity in that of other creative talents. At a moment when the American artist needed most of all, perhaps, a sense that he was at last welcome in his own country and was surrounded by those who understood him, Rosenfeld gave him precisely what he needed: appreciation, encouragement, and sometimes, in the very best sense of the word, patronage; for he brought to criticism an inexhaustible delight in art itself, art in all its manifestations, as the final wonder and justification of life.

Though Rosenfeld established a reputation mainly as a critic of music, he was, in a fashion that gave him few rivals, at home in all the arts; and he brought to their criticism something that must come before discrimination and judgment, even though it cannot replace them: that is, a sound appetite. Though Rosenfeld was too well-bottomed a critic to be pigeonholed as a mere impressionist, he did not regard himself primarily as a

schoolmaster, scrawling corrections on the margin of the artist's composition and bestowing, with the arrogance of his brief authority, "final marks." He could always find good reason for his intuition of the work of art as a whole; and his critical essays sometimes go into the closest kind of technical analysis of the artist's performance; but above all, he sought to awaken in his reader the same passion and delight that a piece of music or a poem had awakened in him, conveying to those who might not be able, as yet, to see or hear the work of art directly, some direct sense of its color, rhythm, or form. At the time Rosenfeld began writing criticism, such a warm receptive approach was the best encouragement an artist could have: it helped create the very audience that was needed for the communication of the artist's work. My chief criticism of this approach to art, on Rosenfeld's side, would be that it possibly curtailed or diverted some of its own creative powers. He gave to interpretation and re-creation energies that might have been more profitably expended, perhaps, on works even more authentically his own. Yet there is always need for the kind of example that Rosenfeld gave; and the need was never more serious than during the years when he was writing for the *Seven Arts* and the monthly *Dial*.

Rosenfeld approached art with humility and joy: but this affirmation of art itself was not given in a gush of indiscriminate appreciation; far from it. Rosenfeld brought to his criticism, not simply receptive wonder and responsive delight, but an esthetic rigor of judgment not unlike that of Henry James, one of the masters whom he revered and thoroughly understood long before the fashion for Henry James had spread even to Suburbia. Different though they were in temperament, there was more than one point of contact between James and Rosen-

feld. Though there was not a touch or tinge of the snob in Rosenfeld, he too valued the securities and felicities of upper middle-class life; with him, too, his naïve attitude toward property and privilege went along with somewhat uncritical acceptance of the injustices and indifferences upon which the bourgeois world of his youth had been built: so naïve was his original acceptance, so irrational was his justification of the status quo, that Alfred Kreymborg and I learned to avoid broaching the basic issues of social justice with him.

Yet, though he relied on money, he never loved it for its own sake or for the sake of the power it might give him over the lives of other men; so that here Rosenfeld, like James, transcended the meaner limitations of his class. But his life and thought were both weakened, I have little doubt, by this umbilical connection with the bourgeois world of his youth, through which, drop by drop, sustenance continued to flow until the cord itself was ruptured in the economic crisis of 1929. His early dependence, which masked itself as "independence," had prevented him from making sufficient efforts to put his own life on a completely self-maintaining basis; and by the time he sought to do it the opportunity had passed and his self-confidence had dwindled. Nevertheless, out of the over-feathered nest in which Rosenfeld was hatched, a creature with wings arose and flew: one of the most sensitive and generous spirits that America has brought forth in our time: a man whose life was a perpetual expression of the Wordsworthian joy of elevated thoughts. After making allowances for the damage that was done to Rosenfeld by his too comfortable bourgeois inheritance, one must not forget the emergent values that offset this damage—the character and temperament and achievement of Rosenfeld himself.

To Paul Rosenfeld, as to Henry James, art was essentially a religious declaration: part of the fundamental structure of life. "In every creative act," he wrote in one of his letters, "something that sees and something that is seen kiss—and what could be more perfect! Besides, the fools"—he was talking about the negative critics and the depreciators—"the fools can't take away *that which we are going toward*, seeing that it is already in us." The italics are his; but I am tempted to underline the last clause as well.

*That which we are going toward which is already in us.* There lies the key to what Rosenfeld was and said and did: life and art were for him a continuous act of revelation, and the best part of it was still to be spoken, still to be disclosed. Most especially for him was Ryder's image of the artist, as a creature like the inchworm, at the tip end of a twig, still reaching out toward that which lies beyond. However deeply his own life might have disappointed him—and no one could be close to him during the last ten years without being aware of a deep undercurrent of sadness—Rosenfeld never lost his sense of the wonder and beauty of life itself, as it came directly, or as it was revealed, more clearly and poignantly, above all more durably, in the forms of art. Even as late as 1942, in the midst of the war, he would report: "I have migrated to my old valley at the commencement of the Adirondack Mt. Reserve for a stay of a couple of weeks. It has been cloudy-cool and revelatory of the nobility of the mountain lines; in the last days it has been warm and scented; and at all times richly green. The great gloom of the forests is a wonder. Of course in these days all plaisances and pleasures seem like hangovers from bourgeois days, with a certain moth-eaten pathos clinging to them. Besides, the present crisis makes everything, even the high Adirondacks,



seem slightly pitiful and suspect. They still make one feel the immanence of a noble touch; but one meets them with a weak skepticism. Still I have had moments of happiness again."

The testimony of this letter is all the more solid because from 1940 onward Rosenfeld's life began to shrink and diminish, for reasons that are still obscure to me, and in some part, perhaps, were also obscure to him. He was too sensitive, too deeply involved, not to respond to the horror and ignominy of the Fascist attack upon civilization: he never muffled either his mind or his conscience in the illusions of the isolationists, nor did he develop the moral calluses that some of our erstwhile intellectual leaders displayed with a perverse, indeed an obscene, pride. In so far as he was spiritually disheartened by the evil and corruption of the times, his plight was only that of all good men; but even before Fascism showed the depths to which human nature could sink, other causes were at work in Rosenfeld's life that sapped some of his vitality. Not the least of these, certainly, was the loss of a good part of his modest fortune through the unfortunate investments of his lawyer before the crash of 1929; for some of Rosenfeld's expansiveness and exuberance had been a by-product of a life free from harassing economic anxieties of any kind: a life that had nourished him with music, books, travel, works of art, and left him free to apply his talents to that which most delighted him.

But there were likewise, more significantly I am sure, other frustrations of a more spiritual nature which came to life in Rosenfeld's middle age; and even had the world been as relatively peaceful and civilized as it had been before 1914, these difficulties would still have caught up with him. The obstacles he encountered within himself in writing his second novel de-

rived, I believe, from this source. The writing of his first autobiographical novel, *The Boy in the Sun*, had been a grateful task to him; and the book itself had had a modest success: it revealed genuine, if not decisive, abilities as a novelist. Following his holiday in Europe in 1929, especially his rewarding sojourn in Rome, he began another novel concerned with personal and religious development. He gave this novel various titles in his letters, during the many years he worked over it: at first it was "The Temple of Venus and Roma"; and in one of the last references it was "Concert in Rome." But for some reason he was unable to complete the work to his own satisfaction; at the end he even thought a little desperately to make the best of this particular frustration by actually calling it "A Novel Without an Ending."

Doubtless there were conflicts and impediments in Rosenfeld that brought these efforts to nothing: not least his own capacity for self-criticism or, what is even worse, for self-accusation; for, after forty, a man often transfers his accumulated load of guilt and self-reproach, too heavy to carry on his own shoulders, to the impersonal creatures he has brought forth: these paper babies, as Rosenfeld liked to call them, are blasted then before they have a chance to leave the womb. Rosenfeld may have been guilty of this unkindness toward his offspring, conceived only to meet miscarriage; or perhaps he was aiming to express the ineffable—to make manifest his ultimate feelings about life, love, religion—and that task, except in media he did not command, such as verse or musical composition, must in its nature defy complete success. Since it was an autobiographical novel, it perhaps waited for some resolution in his own life that never came. Having spent so much time in this effort, his "failure" probably plagued him; the later years

of his life were not, outwardly, so productive as they should have been, and his state was aggravated by the need to supplement his dwindling income with the kind of writing that would contribute to his support: a different matter. But his attitude toward art itself did not suffer from this personal misfortune; it remained what it had always been, generously outgoing and eager. The world of art is full of rejected suitors who turn with vilification and scandalous gossip upon the mistress who has spurned them; but Rosenfeld was not one of these. His attitude toward art was like his attitude toward love: a positive and manly one, springing out of his essential health.

There are those who believe that the poet's vision and his toothache belong to two different worlds; but I do not hold with them: in healthy personalities the vision may suppress the toothache, or, if the toothache gets the upper hand, the ache may warp the vision: either way, they remain unified, active parts of the same organism. So I cannot talk about Rosenfeld's spiritual health without conveying some notion of its bodily aspect. He was in fact a round and rosy-looking man; and I would almost add, to complete the description, that he wore a "runcible hat." Until diabetes brought about a change in his diet, there was something rotundly cherubic about Rosenfeld's face and his body, with his fresh, high-colored skin, his reddish hair and mustache, his brown innocent eyes, so quick to express either merriment or pity or pain; something that recalled the rich vitality of the sixteenth century, the spirit of Rubens, when fleshiness was taken as a natural efflorescence of good spirits. In Rosenfeld there was, however, nothing gross in this tendency toward fatness: in fact, one would have to qualify the effect of it with the adjective "trim." One took this aspect of him in the way one takes the rounding contours of a

pregnant woman, as a happy manifestation of the fertility of life, and an indication that all the juices of the body were harmoniously flowing. Certainly the women whom Paul embraced—I have their words for it—had no sense of the absurd in his appreciative response to their femininity. He was not ostentatiously manly; but that is only another way of saying that he had no doubts or anxieties about his own virility. His masculinity went sweetly with the whole grain of the man; his lovingness toward life at large had its roots in his own genitals. In other matters, practical matters, Rosenfeld took long to grow up; but except in his avoidance of marital responsibilities, in what was probably the most critical moment in his emotional development, one had a sense that he had achieved a happy balance here: the esthetic was not, for him, a substitute for normal heterosexual life, but an enrichment of it. So Rosenfeld approached art as he approached women: eagerly, smilingly, tenderly, enchantedly, knowing that he held in himself the procreative seed and that life needed no other justification than the acceptant embrace and the enjoyment of the living.

Many bachelors find the preoccupations of young married couples a little embarrassing; but not Rosenfeld: rather, he played the part of the encouraging, beneficent Uncle, a fellow traveler on the same happy road, though one who knows that nightfall will bring him only a room in an inn, without even being sure of a companion at supper. He never disparaged the married state; indeed, he sometimes expressed wistfulness at not having found it his own vocation. About one of our *Caravan* contributors he would write: "She and her John were here to see me a few days ago, and the lovable pair are a magnificent demonstration of the nerve-aliveness and character-uncertainty that runs through the entire creative zone." He

adopted a fondly fostering attitude toward my own marriage; and likewise, before Isidor Schneider had become a fanatical party Communist, toward that of Helen and Isidor, the latter another *Caravan* contributor. Rosenfeld had the attitude of nourishing and encouraging life in all its manifestations. In all that concerned the feelings, Rosenfeld was wise; and what he had not experienced in his own person—the relentless daily communion of a married pair, the responsibilities and tensions of parenthood, the remaking of the private ego into a domestic ego, the pervasive oneness of family life—he still had enough imagination to understand and enough sympathy to appreciate.

This zest and eagerness, this playful sense of abundance, which Rosenfeld communicated by his very presence, was not least manifest in his editorial work on the *American Caravan*. From the beginning, he was the central spirit in this enterprise, and carried a somewhat larger burden of the editorial work on his shoulders than either Alfred Kreymborg or I did, partly because he was less bound to menial labor at that time than either of us, partly because it was in him to labor wholeheartedly in what he considered such a good cause, the effort to release the creative spirit in America from the unsavory limitations of commercialism: to give the young a chance to show their work while they were still on probation, and to bring together, in a common enterprise, mature writers like Frost and O'Neill, audacious and experimental ones, like Gertrude Stein, and those who were still quite unknown. Alfred Kreymborg has briefly sketched the history of the *American Caravan*; and it is not for me to embroider it further in this place. But though I had known Rosenfeld for at least five years before we three founded the *Caravan*, our correspondence, so

far as my files reveal it, began only in 1926, the summer when we launched our yearbook; and it was during the next ten years, mainly in the act of working together, that our friendship put forth most of its flowers.

During these years of collaboration, my respect for Rosenfeld's judgment, for his probity and insight, steadily rose: his moral qualities were as strong as his fine esthetic sense, and he showed both capacities in his ability to give a sharp, even a harsh, criticism of an unsatisfactory story or poem, instead of turning it back with a polite evasion. In such cases he treated his dearest friends with the same sympathetic objectivity with which he treated some unknown writers whose path would probably never cross his again. If Rosenfeld could be eagerly appreciative, if that indeed was his dominant mood, he could also be quietly withering, particularly if the writer were a well-established one. His judgment, naturally, wasn't infallible; there were a few writers whose molting feathers Rosenfeld loyally treasured as if they were egret's plumes; but taken as a whole, there was no one else, whether critic or editor, in whose literary judgment I came to have such complete confidence, and I would often question my own decisions when I found them at odds with his. As critic, he had a rare degree of balance: he could value Eliot without becoming hostile to Brooks, he could rejoice in Cummings without rejecting Robinson, and unlike Henry James, he would never have refused the large hand of Tolstoy because it could not be buttoned into the polite Jamesian glove. Though Rosenfeld's personal preference was for works that had color, warmth, vision, the romantic qualities, he was receptive to the dry or flat-footed writing that became popular in the twenties, provided that he thought the writer was, in Rosenfeld's own words, "grappling with what moves us all."

However positive his taste as editor, he did not seek to surround himself with his own images.

With the young, whether they were strident or groping, brash or self-distrustful, Rosenfeld was at his best; he nursed them along with an almost womanly tenderness and delight. If one catalogued the young poets and novelists and painters and musicians to whom Rosenfeld offered appreciation and intellectual hospitality—to say nothing of a timely meal or outright financial aid—the list would almost be a roll call of the new American artists of the twenties and thirties. Rosenfeld was, in the eighteenth century sense, a man of sensibility: exquisitely responsive to esthetic stimulus, moved by color, rhythm, pattern, form, wherever he found them, but never divorcing these qualities from moral values or intellectual significance. He was hostile to academicism, and he was hostile to the wooden, effortful social propaganda of the thirties which so often, in the guise of quickening the social conscience and establishing proletarian literature, treated second-rate reporting as if it were high literature. Not for a moment would he have anything to do with the League of American Writers: “I feel much worse than you do,” he wrote me, “about the rats swarming over the literary battlements and collecting in the watchtowers—all the little opportunist fellow travellers who haven’t any ideas of their own.” But Rosenfeld never rejected a story because he disagreed with the political or moral aim of the writer, unless indeed that aim was an antihuman or insane one; and when a writer of real distinction on the proletarian side, like Richard Wright, submitted his work, Rosenfeld was as eager as either Kreymborg or myself to publish his work.

The following sentences, which Rosenfeld wrote in 1928, seem to me to reveal the foundations of his judgments on a

work of art. They came out of an exchange of ideas we had that summer over Melville, when I was writing my study of him.

As for the work of art, I think it neither a resolution for all nor merely a prophecy. It is a resolution for the individual, it seems to me, offering to set other individuals on the road to their resolutions. It doesn't establish a new institution, even though others may try to make an institution or an academy out of it. Perhaps that is the secret of individual art; it cannot be imitated or theorized into action. It must be relived, and that means a development. But the older art: dare we say it? could be relived and repeated from theory, like a lesson.

He asked in another letter:

Doesn't your problem about Melville depend on your judgement of the aesthetic worth of his later books? Isn't it safest to conclude that the attempt to reconstruct the personality was successful if the resultant book was "beautiful" (healthy), and vice versa? But the type of book makes me think that they were part of the attempt to balance an injured personality which saved it from destruction while the injury was too great to permit a complete reconstruction. —As for the Jungian point of view, I think it shallow. There is always an object behind or before every vision or search, and what is in the depths is really our past. I don't think the personality with a living object goes into itself; unless that object is in some way forbidden it, or the source of mortal conflict. I think Melville extraverted toward savages and inhuman nature; but later withdrew into himself. However, the withdrawal was not complete; the books probably drew the lightning off and left him half-alive in the world. . . .

The end of *Moby-Dick*, the catastrophe, seems to me



related to the Ragnarök idea in so many insanities, the attempt to end not this world but the subjective world incarcerating the victim. I remember a catatonic praecox (an Italian) chanting aloud "Oh Christ and the Virgin. *Finisse il mondo. Finisse il mondo.*" The subject world didn't end; and Melville had not the strength (the will) to make another attempt. How's that? As for Mrs. M. don't forget that the fixation only makes itself felt when challenged. Melville had probably escaped the sexual life through the sea, where the opportunities for women were restricted. I remember now Liebovitz insisting that it was the prevalence of sodomy that revolted Melville from the sailor's life.

Afterthought: what I mean is: if the books are good then the personality was readjusting itself and going to greater limits. If they aren't, then it was merely deteriorating. Good equals the communication of life, and what is outside communication is of no use to the world. We can leave Jung and his casuists to argue whether something which goes to pieces seeking higher levels is superior to something which holds together on lower, particularly where those lower levels were so fertile, powerfully productive. I think that if Melville had been doing what people mean when they say "seeking a greater personality," his impulse would have gone deeper into "objective" reality, and not gotten tangled in "subjective" and "metaphysical" swamps. But here's an end of that.

Earlier than this letter, I had broached to Rosenfeld the special problem of handling the incest theme in *Pierre*, in relation to Melville's own life, for I had many reasons for believing that Melville's use of this forbidden subject pointed to something more than a stale literary fashion: there seemed to me something uncontrollable, and therefore suspect, in his manner of presenting it; and I was inclined to trace it (erroneously, as Dr. Henry A. Murray will presently show) to his fixation

on his mother. Rosenfeld responded to that in characteristic vein:

About incest. I am reminded of the gentleman at the French dinner party addressed on the subject by his neighbour, and answering: "Madam, I am not yet through with adultery." —In the first place, is it possible to rigorously associate incest with despair? The authors of *Die Walkure*, *The Revolt of Islam*, and *La Citta Morta* cannot be called despairing. Even if Ford with *'Tis Pity She's a Whore* can be called black, he is not a collapsing mind. Of course you do not claim that, and I suppose such an interest might be loosely associated with a surrender to despair. I don't know if there is an orthodox Freudian theory. You might ask Brill, who admires Melville. The latter was certainly eaten by a demon, like Kleist, Byron, Nietzsche, etc., etc. My own guesses point in three conflicting directions.

1. A withdrawal of interest from the circumstances of youth and maturity and a return to those of infancy.
2. A defiance of the gods who have planted the incestuous desires in the breast. The author might be supposed to have failed in evading the incestuous intentions and is now challenging the gods and daring a bolt from the blue: saying "You have made me what I am: now punish me if you can."

Or perhaps a desire to overthrow the law and show the normalcy of incest. Perhaps the result of a discovery that everything in life is impossible, that tragedy is inevitable, and thence an expression through incest? I return to my first: a flight from the world to the cause of the trauma and a desire to heal it through expression. It is to be supposed the author thinks of himself as a man defeated *in sexualibus*. The result is a withdrawal of interest from wife, etc., and a desire to mate with oneself. This is the explanation favored concerning R.: incest being the tragic expression of what cannot go emotionally toward its opposite and clings to its own likeness. Suddenly a 4th: interest in incest

excited by a half-conscious interest of the author in his own daughter, or even son? These four may all be the same. Wish you luck. Don't however overlook the demoniac quality of Melville and the fact that he didn't go mad and kill himself, and issued wounded but still living. The demon is of course something which won't transfer to an object, and leaves the victim suspended in a void. All artists have it; all are autoerotic; and only the greatest, Goethe, etc., come out victorious. Instead of autoerotic, perhaps I ought to say in love with God; that too is dangerous. I hope this is not too fantastic . . . (July 3, 1928).

Like not a few writers, Rosenfeld was more clear, direct, and forceful in the intimacies of correspondence than he was when he was deliberately writing for a wider audience; yet the best of his prose has the effortless brilliance and gaiety of his conversational style, the style of a man whom the social occasion puts on his mettle. Though it would have been difficult to have made records of Rosenfeld's wide-ranging conversations—unlike his mentor, Alfred Stieglitz, he rarely repeated himself—and though I never in fact made any such notes, these letters serve to recapture the flow and pressure and bubbling spontaneity of his mind, as he showed it in daily intercourse with his friends and colleagues. His was a probing, supple, spiritually adventurous and hospitable mind, adept at transposing abstract ideas into the language of sense and feeling, where he was completely at home: not rejecting intellectual formulations, not shying at philosophy of dialectic, provided he could finally express them in his own proper medium. If his judgments were sometimes impulsive, if his shots in the dark went wild, he would be the first to correct them. This wise lyricism was the essence of the man.

"Half one's staleness," Rosenfeld wrote from Rome in 1929,

when he was feeling anything but stale, "comes from the lack of disinterested comradeship in art, and nothing so much restores one's faith as a relation with 'kids' while their potentialities are still strong." There was nothing possessive about Rosenfeld's relations with his friends: he neither leaned too heavily upon them, nor did he extend his own hand unseasonably: if anything he retained, for all his warm gift of sympathy, a certain detachment, which perhaps protected him from otherwise unbearable pain. Disinterested comradeship in art was what, above all, Rosenfeld provided. "To have artists about one is wonderful," he exclaimed in another letter in 1927, "and to be loved by them almost divine." That joy was natural to him; there was nothing forced or exaggerated in it; he truly felt that way. He wanted "good things to happen," and he knew that only creative personalities produced these good things. But he also knew that this growth and burgeoning did not come by any mere flexing of the muscles or by willful rapture. So he wrote from Rome, in still another letter:

After all, a moral holiday is necessary from time to time, and I think more things would actually happen, had we more the feeling that they do happen of themselves. For without that "Will of God" nothing does happen, although the Will of God generally implies a good deal of human co-operation. I have finally come to the conclusion that the state of conviction that things do happen and will happen again is super-important, and that without it nothing we try to do avails, but that we have to feel a renaissance is at hand or round the corner. But we do have to feel that the power which drew the miracle of human life out of the "bag" . . . is there. Rome is a good proof of that, for in showing a dozen worlds superimposed on each other, and each wonderful and *imperfect*, it argues for the continuity of a

process, particularly since a certain amount of valuable changes and improvements is discernible. And, curiously enough, it reconciles us to life without persuading us that life will become less "tragical." It sort of puts us into partnership with that Great Artist . . . and so whatever happens or doesn't happen to us doesn't involve bankruptcy.

That health, that balance, that secure but never blind faith, ran deep in the grain of the man; and they were sustained by the alternating rhythm of urban and rural scenes, in which he participated with equal zest. In the winter, one would meet Rosenfeld at concerts and art galleries, eagerly searching and adventuring, never bored in advance or disdainful; loyal in his allegiance to the group around Alfred Stieglitz, as he was to Stieglitz himself, but never uncritically loyal, and not prevented by his loyalty from finding significant work elsewhere. Even during the sourest days of the prohibition era, the parties Rosenfeld used to give from time to time at his apartment in 77 Irving Place had the intellectual gaiety and distinction of a French salon: they needed no liquor to ensure that gaiety, for his eager hospitality, his understanding mixture of people, provided a headier brew. Going away from such parties, one felt that a dozen other people like Rosenfeld, a dozen other such salons, might magically transform the spiritual life of the whole city. In one sense, Rosenfeld was the most completely, the most happily, urbane man of his generation. The city in every aspect was vividly alive to him: not least the architecture; and I remember discussing in detail the theory of color and ornament that Ely Kahn had applied to a Park Avenue office building, on one of our many walks up Lexington or Park Avenue after a *Caravan* meeting.

But Rosenfeld likewise had a deep taste for country life. It was his custom to go out regularly every Sunday for a walk in the country, almost as methodically as Samuel Butler used to do, exploring the region in a score of directions, following the Walker's Guide to the environs. Summers he divided his years between York Harbor, in Maine, and the Adirondacks, with visits to Lake George with Stieglitz, to Trout Dale with Sherwood Anderson, or longer excursions to other parts of the country, like Santa Fe, about which he wrote back ecstatically in 1926. No picture of Rosenfeld would be complete that did not record his hearty response to the American landscape itself. He knew, as Goethe knew, how essential it was to touch the land again, to return to the elementalities: I remember once at Amenia as we went out on the rear lawn to look at the stars before going to bed, he excused himself for a moment and turned aside to urinate, exclaiming at the delight of being close enough to the soil to avoid the chilly roundaboutness of the lavatory. So, again, he would write from Lake George, on a visit to Stieglitz in 1930:

Since I have been up here, for three weeks in fact, I have been amazed at the unendingness of the necessity of learning the lesson that mere fatigue can beat the devil at his own game in this world. Why one lets want of sleep and pastoral peace deceive one continually into believing that the source of things is dried, I do not know; but one does, unquestioningly, and reason only contradicts fatigue for an hour; after that, fatigue puts reason to sleep. God alone knows what tragic decisions have been made under its influence, without even trying out the effects of sleep and peace and space and restful surroundings. It would be a very great weariness that wouldn't loosen its grip on one up here, in any case. When I arrived, I said to myself that I had

forgotten that anything as lovely as this place, with its view of generous mountain flanks and deep narrow lake beneath, and shimmering aspen and waving grasses, existed. The blue and green, as simple as the blue of a freshly banked roadbed and the green of bushes and trees, seemed almost strange to me; and indeed they were, in the clean air and yellow light of the spring afternoon. They seem so still, even if the heaviness and dust of summer is already in the foliage. . . .

One of the best, certainly one of the most characteristic essays that Rosenfeld wrote, for the *Dial*, was one in which he described the landscape of America as it unrolled from the railroad train on a cross-continent journey. He was no starveling of the cities; and though the house he built for himself at Westport did not serve as his residence for long, he participated, by sample if not by continued experience, in all the normal joys of country living: the prison pallor of Broadway never bleached his cheeks. Quite simply, with no ostentatious "nativism," Rosenfeld loved the land and all it brought forth; and that fact is perhaps as important as any purely literary affiliations in explaining his long association with that other lover of country ways and country people, Sherwood Anderson.

This healthy oneness with nature perhaps accounts for the centrality of the man, the quality I would dare to call Goethean, though Rosenfeld would have been the first to admit that he lacked Goethe's robust and all-embracing intellect and his special flair for administration and political activity. In the more practical matters of life Rosenfeld, though he was a good citizen who cast his vote punctiliously and was an inveterate server on juries, was never happily at home: in business negotiations with publishers, for example, he would admit that his

sensitiveness and impetuosity were a handicap, and he was usually content to fall back on my own practical sense in such matters.

But this does not mean that Rosenfeld was a non-political animal, or that he was not concerned with the quality of our political institutions. In his own field, that of criticism, he was vividly aware of such matters: consider, for example, his discerning essay (in *Discoveries of a Music Critic*) on true and bastard nationality, in response to the news that the first act of the Nazis, on getting to power, was to order the performance of Wagner's *Die Meistersinger von Nürnberg*: an act that gave him pause, for he had assumed up to that moment that truly national works of art, such as he sought to nurture in America, would lend themselves only to benign and universal purposes. So he ended that essay with a timely note of warning to the American artists "that, in engaging in conveying to the nation the national idea as moments of energy and freedom constitute it, they must be with caution bold and speak with greatest clearness—in consciousness of the immensity of the profit to life that might flow from utmost clarity, and the immensity of the mischief to it that" failure in clarity and lucidity might bring.

Not for a moment, indeed, did Rosenfeld's preoccupation with the esthetic moment cause him to espouse art for art's sake or to divorce the esthetic achievement of the artist from its moral and political content. Here again one is struck by the political timeliness of his essay on D'Annunzio no less than by its essential solidity. In that essay (reprinted in *Men Seen*) he analyzed the weakness of D'Annunzio's poetic imagination in relation to the theatrical seizure of Fiume and the events that followed. Rosenfeld wrote:



D'Annunzio has found himself neither an Achilles nor a Homer; neither a Byron nor a Wagner. All his mimicry of heroic gestures has not made him the creator, made him neither the hero nor the poet. That we know. We know that his deed is only an empty flourish, whatever its immediate consequences may be. We know it, because never before have we so clearly known in what the creative act consists, and what it is the world demands of the poet and the hero alike. The poet is the man who projects an image beyond himself. His deed is feeling: demonstration of some finer order latent in men; manifestation of the spirit which the institutions and powers of this world crush from the human breast. This is the affirmation the artist makes, in letters and in politics, in every medium; this is the demonstration Michelangelo made in the Medici chapel and in the fortification of Florence alike; and Milton in *Samson Agonistes* and in his secretarial activities, and Byron in *Don Juan* and at Missolonghi. And we today inhabit a world that above all other worlds requires such testimonials. But it is precisely a testimonial to the spiritual might of men that Fiume is not. It is but another triumph of the past in man, all the more complete because it is the work of one who more than any other of his time has mouthed words concerning the glory of art, the grandeur of the poet, the genius of the race.

One hesitates to apply to Rosenfeld the figure, now trite and overworked, that Socrates first applied to himself; yet no other figure in fact suggests so well the special function he performed for his time and his country. In a very special sense, Paul Rosenfeld was the midwife of arts and letters in America: he aided in the gestation of the spirit at a moment of abundant, if undirected, fecundity. The image is an exact one, even to the extent of suggesting both patience and a certain impromptu amateurishness of technique, which was offset by the deeper

sympathy, the truly profound sense of life, he brought to his office. Some of Rosenfeld's successors have had more intensive professional training than he began with: they have been more severely schooled, and may accordingly write on their shingles "Gynecologist" or "Obstetrician"; but that does not mean that either mother or child will, in the normal event, be safer in their hands.

Rosenfeld wanted the creative act to take place through the loving embrace of the artist and his object; and he wanted that act to carry through in the prosperous birth of works of art. But he also knew how much better this process goes on when one leaves most of it to nature. Often in the past the American artist had been completely neglected in childhood; and that was often a crippling handicap. But there remained the possibility that he might be subject to brusque intervention and forceful aids: the academic probe and the editorial forceps carry their own dangers with them. It was Rosenfeld's intuitive understanding of the creative process itself that made him such a skilled helper to those who labored in the spirit. He had sympathy and patience; and he could share the mother's proud joy in the child that came forth. What better gifts could he have offered, at this particular time and place, than precisely these gifts? As an artist, Rosenfeld knew the pangs and labors of all artists: knew, too, that they were unavoidable; and knew that the will of God, not the artist's conscious effort, turned the scales.

Speaking of his own novel he reported:

My bump of reality has developed since I made the first sketches for the thing almost five years ago, and now, nearing the end of the book (still have four unwritten chapters to write), I find myself in a field much more com-

plex than I first imagined, and find that the greater air of reality pervading it menaces the interest of what were once my chief effects. I am not at all sure that my feeling of ruin isn't perfectly keen; but turning over the pages of H. James's preface to *The Portrait of a Lady*, I see that novelists with a control of their material which I will never in all the world approach, have their periods when they look out of the window and wonder whether some right suggestion, some better phrase, the next happy twist of the subject, the next true touch for the canvas, mightn't come along.

All this, I think, is why Rosenfeld's criticism sometimes puts him in the posture of one laboring with the artist, going along with him, imitating his gestures and reproducing his effects, partly by sympathetic magic to help in the process itself, partly to induce in the reader the same feeling that was at work in the artist. Do you say that the result is not criticism? Some of it perhaps is not criticism, in the sense of explicit judgment; but is an art even harder to practice: midway between the creative act itself and the judicial sword; and it justifies itself through the work which it helps to bring forth, and awakens to life with the prompt slap of approval. Rosenfeld was the most helpful critic, I firmly believe, of his generation: he never abused the work of art itself, in order to elevate, by that piece of sleight of hand, the function of criticism. He may, as I have indicated, have been unfair to his own talents in dedicating them so exclusively to the expressions of his contemporaries; but the sacrifice magnificently repaid itself—even if open acknowledgment was often far to seek—in the easing of the artist's travail and the multiplication of his progeny. More than one work of art during the past generation owes its existence, its development, or its understanding reception to Rosen-

feld: because he ardently wanted "good things to happen."

In the twenties it was the fashion, to which Brooks' *The Ordeal of Mark Twain* had given some biographic substance, to blame the miscarriages and stillbirths in American letters upon the hostile preoccupations of an unlovely civilization, the handiwork of the puritan and the pioneer. That explanation was of course too simple; but if Rosenfeld himself had occasionally played with it, he readily corrected his error. "I have come to the conclusion," he said in a letter of 1927, speaking of one of our friends who had sunk into a deeply neurotic state, "that I have made two mistakes hitherto. One was to think there was a thing called America inimical to light, and that the individual was guiltless. The second was to declare America innocent and masochism guilty. Both I see are wrong; it is a combination. Perhaps I shall see myself wrong a third time, when I get a better name for the local devil." Did he ever find and name that devil? I do not know; but I can guess the nature of the creature and the form of his satanism: the withholding of love. Of that sin, in relation to the arts, Rosenfeld was never guilty.

Unfortunately, no one performed for Rosenfeld the function that he had so willingly and cheerfully performed for so many writers, composers, painters, and sculptors. As a result, his own growth was impeded in the later years and he found his sense of direction confused; for it requires a massive egoism, or a towering spiritual pride, the egoism of a Whitman or the contempt of a Melville, to survive—though even then not without being disheartened—the easygoing journalistic tendency to glorify mediocrity and shallowness and to disparage aristocracy and depth. Rosenfeld himself was on the main highway, which inferior contemporaries had deserted for minor

roads that led nowhere; yet he felt himself lost. There had been, up to 1935 or so, a certain confidence and exuberance in all his work, vivid colors, flashing phrases, outbursts of high capering spirits: one felt in his prose the writer's own gusto, and even an occasional tumescent passage would mark his generative vitality. Those who reject Rosenfeld's color and warmth, who uncomfortably feel that it is intellectually suspect, may themselves be suspected of a certain emotional deficiency, like those who experience "color-shock" through the last three blots of a Rorschach test. If Rosenfeld had always up to this time been properly self-critical, he had not been timorous or self-distrustful as concerns his vision and his work. But from 1935 on, his letters sounded a new sad note. Though he resolutely kept his face in the direction in which he had set out, he found himself pushed and buffeted and driven back by a crowd moving in the opposite direction.

Regrettably, both the physical and the spiritual sides of Rosenfeld's life found themselves depleted at the same moment: he could not draw from one account to make up for the insolvency of the other. The financial depression of the 1930's became for him an all-enveloping one; and though he bore his misfortunes without complaint or recrimination, with an unusual degree of stoicism, he could not overcome their painful consequences. He felt the pinch of poverty; or what is even worse, a growing anxiety about what the future would hold for him, once his capital was exhausted; though even in his darkest moments he never entirely abandoned his generous habits of hospitality. From time to time, he would still cook a dinner for his friends in his tiny kitchenette and serve it with his old air of largess, though the crockery was becoming battered, the glasses no longer matched, and the furniture bore a great resemblance

to a bullfighter's nag, ready at some unfortunate move to disgorge its entrails and collapse utterly. Along with this went a shrinkage and withdrawal which affected his relations with others. He knew what was taking place and did not spare himself in appraising the results: he was too manly to throw the blame back entirely on "circumstances," still less to project his own feelings upon the insensate crew of editors, who now too often treated him as if his lifetime of disinterested service to American letters was, if anything, an invitation to an extra gratuitous kick. Yet there was a spark of hope in Rosenfeld that would not be downed: in that sense, his lyric wisdom held to the end. Responding to a letter of mine in 1939, in which I had praised some of the essays I had been rereading in *Men Seen*, he said:

"The fact that the book has pleased you reminds me of the pleasure with which I wrote some of its little chapters, and a project I once had of developing some of them. I think I once had much more bounce to my work; I'm afraid I haven't stood up to the disappointments of life as well as I might have done. But now I know better what I feel and mean—and if I don't get too ponderous may yet write something good." The humility of that letter has deepened with the passage of the years, and I now find it heart-rending: he had so little need for apology, or for a sense of defeat. Yet for all these words, so much of his old *mana* still clung to him, that almost up to the time of his death one hardly sensed the full pathos of his position and the desperateness of his need. What he thought about the disappointments of life, even while he was still in full tide of work, could be gathered from a letter written when he was approaching forty, apropos the demise of the *Dial*, the magazine to which, during its more brilliant and adventurous days, he

had been a most distinguished contributor. "Too bad about the *Dial*, even if it ceased to *act* when Seldes left it. On the whole, the *Dial* is a fine symbol of most things in this world—unsatisfactory, obstructive, only partially responsive to its opportunities; and still leaving a pang and an emptiness when they go."

For most of us, death comes in little stages, in a score of unnoticed acts of deprivation and renunciation, of lapse and disability; and so it came, alas! to Paul Rosenfeld. His novel remained unfinished; the collection of essays he projected, to be called "In the Doghouse," a collection which was to deal with rejected writers and rejected forms of writing, was probably never finished either, almost certainly never offered to a publisher, though one of his letters announced he was working on it; his autobiography, though begun as early as 1942, remains only a fragment. It was not indeed until his case had almost become desperate, that, thanks to the fellowship provided by the Bollingen Foundation, he seemed to draw his forces at last together, preparing to make another sally in full battle array. He applied himself thenceforward to the preparation and writing of a work on literary genres; not certainly a popular subject; but a neglected field of great scholarly interest. The gay Olympian had vanished, the discouraged Titan had withdrawn from battle: now the Pilgrim had withdrawn from the world that would have none of him and settled down to a cloistered task: a work he had fortunately almost completed before he died.

Even earlier, Rosenfeld had written, with regard to a difficult passage in my own life: "You probably feel the universal sense of impermanence, too; after forty, one is prone to that, and this age is devilish. But I know this feeling of aloneness: one is truly solitary, save for one's spirit and its maker." Hard-

ship, disappointment, sorrow, anxiety, all these came into Rosenfeld's life, recording the toll misfortune had taken and adding, by their own presence, to the amount. Yet he met the worst with quiet dignity; there were no neurotic whines or retreats or evasions—only, once in a while, a justifiable touch of indignation, in response to some gratuitous human indignity. To the end he exhibited, beneath the anxious surface, a certain patient cheerfulness and faith. What he said by way of comfort to me, in 1943, he must first have said to himself: surely these words applied well to him: "After reading your letter and comparing the tone of it with the details, I repeat Vivekananda's dictum, applying it to yourself: 'Life is the being's tendency to develop itself under circumstances which tend to crush it.'"

At the end, circumstances tended to crush Paul Rosenfeld, and he applied himself in resolute opposition to that process. Had he lived, I like to think that he would have gained the upper hand: his gay wisdom, strengthened and tempered by adversity, would have done for his own career as a writer what it had so often done for others, watching over their birth-travail: it would have brought new children into the world, the sturdy children of his maturity. At the very end, he was still suffused with wonder, tenderness, and love, feelings evoked equally by nature, by women, by friendship, and by art. "Sometimes," he wrote in 1943, "one feels the possibility of a love of life which asks no reward other than the power of love. Could it manage the world?" The sense of that possibility is present in Paul Rosenfeld's writings from beginning to end: and the hope that it could manage the world is the hope his own work and life have behind them.





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*Part Two*

MANY FACETS

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Waldo Frank

## THE LISTENER

What do you think an artist is? A fool who, if he is a painter, has only eyes, if he is a musician, only ears, if he is a poet, only a lyre for all the chords of the heart, or even, if he is a boxer, only muscles? On the contrary, he is at the same time a social creature, always wide-awake in the face of the heart-rending bitter or sweet events of the world and wholly fashioning himself according to their image.

PABLO PICASSO

### *a*

*Musical Portraits* is an authentic and organic work of literary art. The compositions of twenty masters, from Wagner, Moussorgsky, Berlioz, to Debussy, Stravinsky, Bloch and Ornstein, are subjected to a kind of esthetic transformation which produces, not a group of critical judgments on the music, not a descriptive gallery of either musics or composers, so much as a poem: the poem of a modern temperament experiencing his day through music.

Of course, the texture of the poem is complex. Exposure to different musics brings out a variety of traits and of extra-musical capacities in the poet. Wagner introduces the volume: the great voice of the coal age of power which for a generation was the idiom of tone throughout the world. And the prose relative to Wagner's music sounds like Wagner. There are equal sonorities, dark, tumescent, self-indulgent. It is clear that the poet has been able through his prose to express his captivity to Wagner. But before the chapter closes, the liberation

has set in: the rejection of Wagner's world in favor of horizons and depths whose dolorous search by modern man will be more positively expounded in later chapters on the later music.

What seems a natural mimicry of modern musical languages goes through many variations. In the chapter on Moussorgsky, for instance, the tone is plangent, long-rhythmed, coarse, of earthy odor. The Franck piece gives luminous grace notes to the classical structure. In the Bloch, we hear the clash of heated arguments between the East and the West; in the concluding pages on Ornstein (that most neglected of important modern composers), steel shuttles and tears through human flesh; and in the Debussy an iridescence wavers on calm waters. Now, this is definitely not pastiche; the words "mimicry" or "adaptation" are therefore not correct. Nor can the prose be said objectively to describe or depict the music—as for instance Romain Rolland describes the symphonies of Beethoven or W. J. Turner the *Don Giovanni* of Mozart. We are here in the presence of something more mysterious, more organic: a *correspondence* between a body of prose and the bodies of music as these impinge upon the poet.

The book's progression is not simple chronology: its design, conscious or not, is more complex. Thus, Richard Strauss immediately follows Richard Wagner (as Kaiser Wilhelm the Little came after Kaiser Wilhelm the Great); then a second theme is introduced into the symphony: the Russian masters, followed by a new synthesis—a third theme—in which both Wagner and Moussorgsky fuse and re-create the music of France. The vicissitudes of these themes are symphonically followed and lead to a coda that is a new beginning: the translation of the experiences of Europe into American voices: Bloch and Ornstein.

It is important to note that the quality of the prose is not uniformly good. When the poet is negative and aloof, as in the pages on Strauss, Liszt, Rimski-Korsakov, Rachmaninov, and others, the writing suffers. The attempts to analyze a composer's failure are, usually, themselves failures. The poet at this stage is best when he is "corresponding" with his loves and devotions. When he dislikes (Mahler, Loeffler, Reger), he becomes inadequate; such chapters are almost like impatient transitions to later enthusiasms, as for Debussy or Bloch. This is a significant trait, which will help us later to understand the poet.

Of course, a primary critical element does inform and direct the essentially poetic work: the author's *taste*. It is manifest at this beginning of a career that we have to do with an aristocrat of taste. The poet's sense of an organic design and growth is guided by distinctions: the tawdry in Strauss, the prostitute plush of Rachmaninov, the impotent in Loeffler, the pretentiously sterile in Reger, are negatives that enhance the positive recognitions. But the temperature of these negations reveals that we have here not so much the critic as the lover. Paul Rosenfeld swiftly angers; usually for good cause (not always: he can be violently unjust); then he becomes less the critic than the moralist and the preacher. Now, to be a good moralist demands, of course, an effective philosophic instrument; and here we come upon a weakness. The poet needs, for example, to know "why" the grandiose music of Mahler failed: "why" Mahler must be excluded from the Rosenfeldian symphony of acceptance. He jumps to the summary conclusion that the reason is Mahler's failure to accept his Jewish roots. I know neither the music of Mahler nor the man sufficiently to judge the facts, which may be as Rosenfeld states them. The point

is, that the poet turned critic does not make his own explanation cogent. In the same chapter, Rosenfeld makes the analogy of "the huge, misshapen 'giants' that stand before the old Palace in Florence, work of the obscure sculptor who thought to outdo Michelangelo by sheer bulk"—as Mahler is claimed to have sought to outdo Beethoven. But was this "bad" sculptor a Jew who denied his roots or simply a man without talent? And why did Reger fail—ostensibly for causes whose distinction from Mahler's downfall are not made palpable.

This is one instance of severe critical weakness in Rosenfeld's first book: a failure to generalize correctly, a tendency to substitute personal impulsive temper for judgment based on conceptual knowledge. But oddly enough, here, in Paul Rosenfeld's *poiesis*, it is scarcely a flaw, since it articulates positive strands in the writer's temperament. The moral fervor about one's Jewish roots, for instance, may be inadequately applied to Mahler's unhappy case or to Bloch's success; but as a note of the poet's passionate attempt to find music's human meanings, of his passionate tendency to moralize and to *ethicalize* esthetic experience, it is an integral part of Paul Rosenfeld's poem. Passion is the significant word: passion is the tonality of the entire volume. It is a trait that never grows dim in subsequent writings.

The good taste and passionate devotion frequently beget exquisite critical perception. The volume is full of (to employ a favorite Rosenfeldian word) genial *aperçus*. One example is the discovery that the musics of Debussy and Stravinsky are the different responses of two temperaments and two cultures to the same objective world. (This is the kind of observation which might help our statesmen in their dealings with Russia and Europe, if they were not illiterate and anesthetic.)

The prose of this first book may falter, when it is not positively uplifted by its musical subject. It may at times be airless, plethoric, clumsily insensitive to the basic structure of English—as if it were lost in musical, rather than formed by linguistic, rhythms. But it is an ambitious prose, profoundly original in its purposes; and the writer was not yet thirty! To call *Musical Portraits* a merely promising work is not enough. The poem as a transmutation of musical into literary experience is by no means perfect; but the achievement is more than enough to give the work intrinsic and, I am convinced, survival value. What it reveals is primarily a *literary* temperament. The field of the experience is the living background of a cultivated New Yorker born in 1890, bred in the values of the “coal age” personified by Wagner, and moving beyond them, in the spirit of Western man, toward the electric age and a new human liberation.

b

Three years later, *Musical Chronicle* was published. In the organic sense, this is not a book at all, but a miscellany of thirty-five essays on musical subjects with wide freedom of association beyond the strictly musical realm. A few of the pieces are continuations of the portrait form and could have been included in the earlier volume: notably, the study of D'Indy which could have followed Franck; the Bruckner; the fine prophetic piece on Bartók; and the pages (in “The New German Music”) which are really the fulfillment of the earlier inferior portrait of Schönberg. Other essays are repetitions or variations of material more essentially treated in the first volume: on Bloch, Ornstein, Strauss, Mahler, Franck, Saint-Saëns, and others. The interesting trait of these is that they



are more critical, more analytic, and less "portrait." In the first volume, the discoveries of taste, the passionate judgments, the impulsive analyses, are suffused into the dominant dynamic texture of the poem as a whole. The experience with music inspires an independent body, which is the poem. Here, the strands of judgment and of mood tend to stand alone. And many traits are revealed, in extension, often in isolation, which were less manifest, perhaps less evolved, in the integrated texture of the earlier work. Thus, the "Prologue to the Annual Tragedy" which opens the volume is an intimate essay so close in its lyrical-literary rhetoric to Elia that it sounds almost like an imitation (a very brilliant one) of Charles Lamb. The same elegiac strain inspires the charming evocation of Paris in the essay on Charpentier's *Louise*. It becomes clear that if Rosenfeld somewhat sentimentally loves the old capitals of Europe, he knows their language. The pieces on musical mediocrity (Damrosch, Tchaikovsky, Carpenter, again Mahler) are shorn of the positive poetic context which informed them in the first volume, and come at times uncomfortably close to displays of bad temper. But new potential strengths are revealed, also. Mordant satire, for instance; social fervor; a new dexterity of critical treatment, and a novelist's power to personify a town, an audience, a situation.

The book, then, as a whole appears to follow the tradition of "second books": the loss of the early lyrical organic statement, and the accretion of new complex materials not yet wholly organized. The prose in this second volume (much of which was written as early as the first) is never quite as good as the best in *Musical Portraits* and at times it is worse than the earlier volume's least good pages. This is not accidental. In such essays as "The Concert Hall" and "The Bethlehem Bach Festival,"

the poet's reach is far beyond his grasp. He is directly attacking the problems of modern society; he is attempting to depict, in terms of human value, the defects of a modern audience, or of a modern city; he does not know enough to focus his attack. *Musical Portraits* by no means ignored these problems; but the scrutiny of social-psychological traits of the modern world was held strictly to their manifestation in music. These, the poet was able to assimilate directly. In those essays of the second volume, where he assumes the role of critic, he becomes peripheral, revealing chiefly his own *malaise*. The reason is a faulty discernment of causes for the phenomena from which he suffers. The poet can read the page of Wagner or Stravinsky; when he tries to read an open page of New York or of Bethlehem, Pennsylvania (where Bach and steel towers simultaneously pierce the smoky air), he does not know the grammar and becomes confused. And the confusion affects the writing whose cacophony of ill-assorted clauses is at times almost unreadable.

This weakness in critical foundations for his study of the more directly intellectual and social phenomena of our time (literature and ethos) detracts from the importance of the volumes that immediately followed: *Port of New York* and *Men Seen*, despite their many penetrating, passionate pages. Even more disappointing is the novel, *The Boy in the Sun* (1928), the poet's one incompetent work. A good novel is a poem, in which diverse tissues of social and personal fact are essentialized into a unitary pattern. The creative process is not primarily critical or conceptual; but the poet, intuitively, must have the power to unify himself; and it is this unity which crystalizes, directs, and incarnates the material of the novel. Just this was Paul Rosenfeld's achievement in his first volume. Why he could not transmute this power into the imaginative field to which his

great gifts drew him, we shall understand as we go on. Meanwhile, his self-expression through musical experience continued to broaden and to deepen. With passion, rendered acute by judgment, he discovered America's young music. The "musical" chapters of *By Way of Art* (1928) are by far the best of that volume. And *Discoveries of a Music Critic* (1936) reveal still firmer evolutions.

It is important to analyze certain of these developments. In *By Way of Art*, there is, for example, a chapter on Stravinsky that is a masterpiece. No novelist could have drawn the Russian more essentially and more graphically. But here, too, in a few strokes, is Paul Rosenfeld himself, more poignantly alive than in all the pages of his autobiographical novel. The dialogue (surely too subtly brilliant to have taken place) between the Russian and the American reveals the anxious heart of the crisis of cultural expression, as the 1920's ran down into the dogmatic wastelands of the 1930's. This is criticism, if you will, made three dimensional with the novelist's gifts. Other chapters are a return, with a new master's concision, to the earlier portrait form: notably those on Copland and Chavez. Take as an example this introductory paragraph:

There's a new colt in the American pasture, all legs, head and frisking hide. You may call it Aaron Copland's musicianship, if you like, which however won't prevent it cantering past you on long uncertain stilts at your next encounter with it; the body oddly small in proportion to the motor-power; the head huge, and as wooden and devilish as that of a rocking-horse. It's an amusing affair, in the incomplete assemblage of the organs, limbs and twinkling skin of the racer; charming with the awkwardness of the large young thing not too long from the mother. Impressive, too; since it's so conspicuously the colt of American

brass and momentum, of all that is swift and daring, aggressive and unconstrained in our life; slender blood-brother of the new architecture and the other constructive flights of the bold temperaments.

One needs to know the personality as well as the music of our Composer Extraordinary to the World at Large, in order to appreciate the concise verity as well as the sprightly enthusiasm and animal spirits of these lines (marred, characteristically, by the last clause with its mixed metaphor). And there are equally good pages in *Discoveries* on Gershwin and Bach, on Varèse and Mozart. But the poet's attempt to write a schematic *Hour with American Music* (1929), despite its excellent thumbnail sketches, reveals his inability to synchronize the "advance" of American music with the social-intellectual context.

## c

This too swift survey of a puissant temperament at grips with great experience has, I hope, given us the data we need to indicate some of the main meanings of Paul Rosenfeld's career within an American epoch. When Paul Rosenfeld returned to his native New York from Yale in 1912, his literary interests and aims were already determined; they were not directed in any degree toward the interpretation of music. He was soon at work on a novel. Like many upper-class New Yorkers of that period whose origin was German-Jewish, he played the piano—with more temperament than technique; he was interested in all the arts; but his creative will was to write imaginative prose. The moderns who most appealed to him were writers; and *auditives* for the most part; not creators of mainly visualized and intellectualized structures. Among his favorites were the

early "Pre-Raphaelite" Yeats, George Moore, Morris, Meredith, Pater, and Arthur Symons. These were all "writers by ear." Moore translated the solid structures of his French masters into lush musical prose. Meredith doomed himself by his erroneous interpretation of the novel as poem (which it must be to achieve esthetic value); by his attempt to translate the literal rhythms of the Elizabethan drama into modern English prose. The early Yeats and Pater were exemplars of the current Continental trend to reduce poetry (Rimbaud, Mallarmé, Verlaine) and criticism (Schwob, Suarès) to music. In brief, several years before Paul Rosenfeld suspected that he would achieve his most characteristic writing through his experience with music, he was already, in his literary tastes, not a seer, not a thinker, but a *listener*.

The process that was to make him the poet of perhaps the most remarkable prose devoted to music in all literature was not a conscious one. As with so much of the good literary work of the past hundred years, this process held an element of personal frustration with a symbolic cultural meaning. This is not to suggest, with the psychoanalysis school of critical nonsense, that the personal frustration "caused" the art. Kierkegaard was not a religious genius because his love-life went wrong; but his personal difficulty symbolized, sharpened, and energized the cosmic anxiety at the core of his religious genius. Poe was not a creator of visions because he drank to excess; but the exacerbation of his nerves, the social isolation, brought about by his genius, were enhanced by his drinking. To return to Paul Rosenfeld: his tendency to "listen" at the expense of other contacts with reality, already evident in his literary tastes, was encouraged when, as a young writer, he confronted the overwhelming spiritual and intellectual chaos of our time.

It was easier for him to "hear" it, and to try to "hear" its prenatal signs of a new birth, than it was for him to master the chaos conceptually or in the writing of organic structures of the imagination. Being an artist and a man of integrity, where could he "hear" the modern world—its anguish of defeat, its joys of promise—and where "re-create" it, better than in its music?

The auditive writers whom Rosenfeld admired (Moore, Meredith, Yeats, James, and many others) were not compelled to write on music; their subjects remained the common ones of imaginative writers; they merely relied on the auditory for tonality and structural key. Paul Rosenfeld's temperament was more powerful, more generous, more impassioned. Therefore, he heard too much; he received too much. To organize all he heard into independent, major literary forms (like Moore's master, Flaubert, or like Péguy, another of Rosenfeld's favorites) would have required—for want of a social-cultural context like that of the French, an emotional self-mastery, an intellectual discipline, a conceptualizing power, which Paul Rosenfeld never achieved. In this sense, his profoundly original work with music was "helped" by his frustrations. The music he employed for his own expression was itself the expression of the raw materials of the modern world. The raw experience which the novelist transmutes was too much for this poet. But this does not mean that, in the alchemy of his "correspondences" to music, he did not contribute rich substance of his own. Paul Rosenfeld's "musical criticism" would not have been the dynamic *poiesis* that he made it, without his own social anxiety and rebellion, his ethical fervor, his often confused but never blunted passion for the catharsis of truth.

If what Wagner, Berlioz, Schumann, Rolland, wrote about

music was "musical criticism," Paul Rosenfeld was never primarily a music critic. And if he knew far less about music than these musicians, he expressed far more than they in his writings "about" music. The attitude of them all toward their subject was objective; they delivered themselves of certain judgments, historical, intellectual, esthetic, on specific compositions. Only Wagner, of those I have named, strove to "put himself whole-dimensionally, poetically," into his writings on music, and Wagner is Rosenfeld's forerunner. But Wagner was a musician; Rosenfeld was the writer.

The true ancestors of Rosenfeld's literary art are the great French impressionist critic, André Suarès; Proust in one of his phases; and, above all, the English essayists: Lamb, De Quincey, Hazlitt, Borrow. The differences are, of course, immense. Lamb made a musical prose of his ever smug escape into all the comfortable traditions hidden beneath the smoke of industrial London. De Quincey soared from the industrial curse into the opiate realm of fantasy. Borrow expressed his revolt by pae-anizing Spain, wild Wales, and the Gypsies. Paul Rosenfeld heard too much for such simple methods; and he was morally too involved to try to escape at all. The crisis of his time was in him, as it was never in a Hazlitt. Paul Rosenfeld confronted his time. He heard what the 1920's heard: the doom of the old world, the perilous stirrings of the new. These, in the most devoted way he knew, he identified and loved and fought for.

He lacked the conceptualizing power to produce, despite his passionate concern, a direct major organ of cultural criticism; he lacked the inward integration of his over-affluent nature, by which to project his own image upon the world and make it organically live in a novel. The integrating principle was there, discernible to the mind which was ready to receive it. He felt

its need, and his own lack. But he rejected the false syntheses of the 1930's: the reactionary narrow pseudo humanism of the T. S. Eliot school, and the man-excluding superficializations of the dogmatic Marxists. These rejections helped create his solitude. And left him alone with the pathos of his sense of need of what lay close to him, and yet remained beyond him. This pathos, suffused with his passionate awareness of the world's deep chaos and with his search for spiritual health, poignantly lyricized his writings.

*d*

The publication of *Musical Portraits* and *Musical Chronicle* in the early 1920's would have announced to our intelligentsia (had it merited the name) the arrival of a writer with rounded capacity of nerve and muscle, intensity and purity of devotion, inspired taste, and richness of cultural experience not approached by other esthetic critics. Paul Rosenfeld should have been lifted to a position of authority. What happened is known: America lived down to its mean century-old record of neglect of the creative men it cannot place in ready pigeonholes. The literary technicians had just wit enough to cry out at his stylistic imperfections and run away, lest the hot lava of such passion overwhelm them. The "realists" could not read him, as they had never learned to read reality. The musicians shook dubious heads about "whether he really knew music." And the flabby cultivated reading public kept on, as usual, running after the latest comfortable "isms."

Paul Rosenfeld too grandiosely personified the 1920's to be accepted by them. The age, too, was a "listener." The impressionistic novelists led by Sherwood Anderson, the impressionistic poets headed by Sandburg, the esthetes, the economic school



of critics, in so far as they had senses at all, were "listeners"—even if what they heard was mainly the newly arrived dogma from Europe. What even the best of them lacked was the power to integrate the report of their senses, the dynamic of their emotions, the discoveries of their minds, into that lucid unity of spirit which wins a basic vision of man and a method to enact it. Analyzed, the paradox of Paul Rosenfeld's unpopularity, like all paradoxes, becomes a truism. These insufficiencies of his age were his own. But Paul Rosenfeld was a "listener" in heroic terms. Obviously, the little "listeners" could not hear him. In our perspective, it should at last be plain that that period of ferment, of anguished hope, of parabolic quest and broken discovery, had in the writings of Paul Rosenfeld one of its few significant exponents.

The 1920's tangented off into the several *culs-de-sac* of its basic inadequacies: the pseudo humanism of the neo-Babbitts and Eliots, the sterile economisms of the *New Masses*, the *Nation*, the post-Croly *New Republic*. The 1930's should have taught a lesson to the 1940's. But the war has kept the decade suspended in impotent defeat. If there is to be continuity in American culture, it must be the 1950's that will carry on the 1920's; dredging at last the integrative channels whose lack made the 1920's run down into the sands of the 1930's. A first step in this recovery will be the scrapping of most of the current cultural and literary values; the burial without honor of most of the contemporary "leaders." And if this time comes, if the human spirit makes for itself a home in the United States, the place of Paul Rosenfeld will be secure. That fatherland will know him as one of its martyrs, as one of its pioneers.

## PROMPTER OF FICTION

ON A NIGHT in November, 1913, between Forty-Second and Forty-Third Streets in New York, Paul Rosenfeld, then a young man recently out of Yale and waiting for a job to open up on the *Times*, was struck by a sudden thought which changed his life and probably has had a good deal of influence on the lives of some other people. The thought was that he didn't have to get a job if he didn't want one. He realized, "imbecile that I was, that I didn't have to go on working on a newspaper if I didn't want to. I had a small income, and could write if it pleased me. This was a revelation!" This thought changed his life, for as a result he devoted himself for the next thirty-three years, with peculiar purity of purpose, devotion, and impersonality, to the arts of his time. The product of that long period of effort, of the fusion of "democratic *mystique*" and "aesthetic *mystique*" which he once said was the object of his critical and creative writing, has been discussed and evaluated elsewhere. What I have been asked to comment on here, however, is the influence which he could exercise incidentally and informally in his personal contacts. I can do this only by recollecting some of the details of my own acquaintance with him, my share in the spirit of that "small income" which made it possible for him to devote himself to the arts.

I first met Paul Rosenfeld in the late summer or fall of 1927

when I came to New York as a student. Either Allen Tate or Kenneth Burke probably introduced me to him. I do not remember the occasion, but I do remember my first visit to his apartment and his conversation about E. E. Cummings and Sherwood Anderson, two writers whom I greatly admired but whom I was not to meet for many years to come. (In 1945 Rosenfeld introduced me to Cummings.) One anecdote about Anderson sticks in my mind. One night Rosenfeld and Anderson, walking down a street in New York, noticed a policeman ahead of them. Rosenfeld, who had always regarded a policeman at best as a sort of brute and at worst as a sort of enemy, made some remark. "Look how he's walking," Anderson replied, "you can tell his left foot hurts him." The anecdote was a good and right one for Anderson. The other anecdotes about Anderson, and the things he said about Cummings' poetry, have escaped me now, but it is easy to recapture some of the echo of the excitement of the occasion and to appreciate what I could not appreciate then, the simplicity and generosity which made Rosenfeld sit up half the night and, without any hint of boredom, answer the dozens of questions which a boy would put to him.

There was another aspect to that first visit which did not seem important at the time but which became more important later. Rosenfeld talked a little bit about modern painting and showed me some pictures. I was then completely ignorant of modern art. A college course in the history of art, a course which stopped somewhere back in the nineteenth century, had done nothing to remedy that defect. My literary friends in Nashville had had little interest in the subject or at least had failed to communicate it to me. I had seen a few pictures in San Francisco and once or twice had heard the esthetician

Stephen Pepper talk about modern painting, but I had not taken advantage of my acquaintance with Pepper to pursue the topic. It was Rosenfeld who really introduced me to modern painting, and whose talk about it stirred my first interest. In the year of 1927-28, when I came down from New Haven for week ends, I saw Rosenfeld now and then, and at his instigation or in his company, saw a few exhibits. The first, I think, was a show by Georgia O'Keeffe. In subsequent years when I saw Rosenfeld, the visit would often involve a trip to a gallery. The last exhibit to which he took me was one of Monet's work, two or three years ago. The really important thing for me, however, was not the mere fact that Rosenfeld introduced me to modern painting. The important thing was that he managed to set it for me in relation to the impulse behind modern literature.

My first acquaintance with Rosenfeld was at the time when he, with Van Wyck Brooks, Lewis Mumford, and Alfred Kreymborg, was editing the *American Caravan*. At that time I had already published poems in the *Fugitive*, the *Double Dealer*, the *New Republic*, and one or two other magazines, but that fact did not diminish my pleasure in Rosenfeld's interest in my writing and in his willingness to take some poetry for the *Caravan*. My most direct literary debt to him, however, did not involve poetry but fiction.

Rosenfeld was responsible not only for publishing my first fiction but for its very existence. I had written a few quite horrible short stories in my early undergraduate days, but I had realized how horrible they were and had given up fiction for life. My acquaintance with Katherine Anne Porter in 1927-28 and the fact that Caroline Gordon was writing stories about a section of the country which was my own stirred some interest in fiction and led me to the quite obvious thought that fiction

might be written about what I knew most about. But all of my reading in that period was in poetry and American history.

In the course of some conversation, probably in September of 1929, I told Rosenfeld something about the background of a possible story or novel. He said little about it at the time, but a month or two later he wrote me at Oxford to ask me to do a novelette for the *American Caravan IV*. I agreed to try, and so in the winter of 1929-30, between sessions at the Bodleian Library, where I was working on a thesis, I wrote a long story about rural Kentucky life in the early part of the century. I suppose that a certain amount of unconscious homesickness and nostalgia went into the effort. In any case, the story was for those months the central fact of my existence. I finished it in the spring, and mailed it off to Rosenfeld. I felt that I had an enormous stake in the story, and could scarcely wait for his reply. He apparently sensed my anxiety, for he did not write but cabled. He said that he liked the story very much and that it would appear in the *Caravan*. It was published under the title "Prime Leaf."

For better or worse, Rosenfeld had committed me to writing fiction. In the next several years I wrote two novels for which I did not find publishers. With the third novel I returned to the material of the novelette which I had originally written for Rosenfeld. I offered the material to Houghton Mifflin in applying for one of the Literary Fellowships, with Rosenfeld, I think, as one of the sponsors of the project. The book appeared, ten years after Rosenfeld had made the original suggestion, as *Night Rider*.

It was always easy to be grateful to Rosenfeld for tangible benefits, but, upon reflection, it is also easy to be grateful to him for certain intangible benefits. Quite effortlessly and natu-

rally he could create an atmosphere of comfortable and dispassionate candor in which conversation thrived. There was, however, a peculiar impersonality about that atmosphere. Rosenfeld was an artist at making a guest develop his own views and ideas, but he himself, though capable of firm opinions, never insisted upon them. Only once did I ever hear him make a violent utterance. At my last meeting with him, at a dinner in his apartment in 1945, I made some remark about Ezra Pound's arrest and imprisonment, and he burst out: "I don't want to talk about it! I can't talk about that man!" (In the case of Ezra Pound the "democratic *mystique*" and the "aesthetic *mystique*" did not square.) But ordinarily Rosenfeld was extremely reserved. I knew him well for almost twenty years, but now I realize that in certain respects I did not know him at all. An outlander like myself, coming to or through New York on hurried trips, saw him perhaps once a year, or even more infrequently. But when I did see him there was the atmosphere of warmth and candor which his breadth of taste, his generosity of nature, his inquiring bent of mind, and his refusal to impose himself always created. It was an atmosphere which you always left with the sense that your own work would be worth trying to do, and that even if you failed at it the effort itself would have its value and its own rewards.

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## THE SHAPER

PAUL ROSENFELD was a shaper who lived a life of shaping, that is to say, a *Schöpfer*, who lived for the sake of *Schöpfung*. Perhaps there existed for him an ideal *Schöpfung*, a world composed of music, but which did not whirl round in music alone; or of painting, but which did not expand in color and form alone; or of poetry, but which did not limit itself to the *explication orphique* of the poet. But whether or not there was an ideal *Schöpfung*, in which everything coalesced, toward which everything converged, the truth about him seems to be that he was incessantly engaged or involved or attracted by the activity of shaping.

This is the life of the artist, whether the artist be the young sculptor or the old politician, or, say, sociologist; whether the artist be the young Spanish painter or the barbarian statesman. Thus, if the uncertainty in the case of Rosenfeld suggested by the words "engaged or involved or attracted" had been a certainty, if the shaping had been the obsession of a single shape, if the fascinated interest had become a determination of the will to be executed with all the *Schöpferkraft* of which he was capable, we should have said, afterward, that this urbane and somewhat placid figure had not really surprised us. The uninterrupted activity of shaping dissipated the possibility of an ultimate shape.

This constant shaping, as distinguished from constancy of shape, is characteristic of the poet. Rosenfeld appears to have been too eagerly sensitive to the figures about him to be able to isolate himself or to permit himself to be isolated, in any single shaping of his own. He was the young man (for a long time) of eager intelligence, conscious of the creative forces of his generation and delighting in them. In a way, he lived and spoke in constant praise of his generation. It may be that his generation as a whole was the ideal *Schöpfung* to which Rosenfeld has been related. He was conscious of his generation as a whole and while he may have praised it without thinking that that was what he was doing, he would have done it just the same had it occurred to him because, although he itemized, the sum of the items was his generation. In short, he saw the world in his character as poet. To be explicit, he delighted in and praised the poetry in the activity of the young sculptor, the young painter, and so on.

To be still more explicit, his character as poet made it easy and natural for him to give character to the young poet, the most inchoate of human beings and yet potentially the most choate. If it should not be quite true that poets are born, not made, it seems certain that if made they must be made shortly after being born. Even then they lose character quickly. The existence of certain figures checks this loss of character. The figure most likely to do this seems to be that of the perfectly normal creature who is touched by poetry, the man of intelligence who discloses by his interest and sympathy that poetry is something significant to him. Rosenfeld was such a character.

He was not the critic angered by the idea that poetry is so much twaddle fit for fools. He was a poet himself; and he would as soon have thought that philosophy is the nonsense of apt



comedians. As a member of a group, as a familiar figure, without eccentricity, saying and writing things of understanding, he communicated confidence and discipline, and a sense of the necessity of both; and in that, too, he was shaping, helping to give shape, to those to whom that meant becoming choate.

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*Kenneth Burke*

## KINDS OF SENSIBILITY

HIGH AMONG Paul Rosenfeld's great virtues as a critic was his unusual ability to make us feel the *urgency* of art. He believed in art devoutly; and he was always straining to arouse in others that same belief. In commemorating Alfred Stieglitz, he wrote that Stieglitz "ever fought for art." The expression would fit Paul Rosenfeld as well.

His intensity of esthetic responsiveness, joined with an evangelical desire to find or found a "community of temperament," made him love prophets so profoundly that, like prophets, he would seem to gather us up. And so he used whatever resources he could muster, sometimes impressionistic, sometimes analytic, sometimes historical, for commending to us the artist whose work he was discussing. Appreciation, with him, was partisanship. He wanted us to meet a work half way. And to do this, he seemed to be saying always, we must meet it with feeling.

Typically, therefore, when he turned to the study of literary

genres, he approached them primarily in terms of sensibility. He used many words like warm, passionate, exquisite, magic, sonority, imaginative, tenderness, visionary, rapturous, cryptic, infectious, tormented, somber, overflowing. Behind them always was the desire to convey the urgency of art.

"The object of literature in general," Paul Rosenfeld wrote in an essay on Bernanos and the Catholic novel, is "delectation through the true expression of feeling." Then, narrowing his subject from the generic to the specific, he continued: "What sets these particular fictions apart and has emboldened critics to speak of them as a distinct species is the singular circumstance that the feelings conveyed by them are consciously, almost fiercely, in accord with presumably Catholic tenets or theories."

The purpose of literature in general, then, is the true expression of feeling in general. And any particular literary genre is thus seen to be an expression of particular feelings. Or perhaps more accurately, it is the expression of universal feelings in a particularized idiom. Or, as he wrote in the tribute to Stieglitz (*The Commonwealth*, August 2, 1946):

While the inner truth of things, which is the artist's real subject, remains the single truth in every age and clime—indeed in every great personality—it speaks a different language or dialect. Curiously, this language or dialect often times is incomprehensible or abhorrent to its contemporaries.

There are many approaches to this matter. But the typically Rosenfeldian approach is in terms that quickly lead us into the world of vibrant temperament. That is, the attempt is made to study some form by studying the emotional nature of some characteristic work written in that form, and seeing beyond

this into the emotional nature of the author. Preferably, the author selected will be one who himself made major and novel contributions to its establishment, development, or perfection. Then, in the light of the insight thus attained, kindred works and authors are examined. When the method is most successful, the reader gets a sense of placement in ever-widening circles, ranging from the individual, through the "community of temperament," to the connections with artistic expression considered universally.

Other ways of building are also employed. Sometimes the critic is discussing the artist's distinctive temperament. Sometimes he is discussing the artist's distinctive situation (the relation between mode of expression and the circumstances of the artist's own particular life). Sometimes the artist is considered in terms of his contemporary situation generally, as it affects all those of his times, rather than as applied to the artist individually. Sometimes the attention is directed to the nature of the expression itself, the characteristic ways in which the medium is formed and exploited. Add, now, the other two aspects that we have already considered (the placing of the work in a continuity of kindred expressions, and the placing of the work in terms of human sensibility generically), and I believe you have the procedures most typical of the method.

No, there is at least one other characteristic which should be stressed. Thus, when asking himself about the influence of Rimbaud (*Tomorrow Magazine*, December 1944), Paul Rosenfeld wrote:

Very shortly after his death, indeed, his prodigious influence began revealing itself. The secret of this influential effect may well lie in the circumstance that all culture runs in predestined cycles; that Rimbaud swiftly had anticipated

the predestined evolution of culture in our epoch; and that young men, in looking back at him, received the courage to take their own inevitable steps. We prefer, however, to believe that the secret lies in the circumstance that his genius gave an enormous prestige to certain new values and ideas, attitudes and methods implied by or expressed in his work, and thus put these values in the way of calling forth similar ones, similar ideas, attitudes, and methods latent in younger minds temperamentally akin to his own.

By another route, I suppose, we here again come upon the "community of temperament" (an expression used by Rosenfeld himself in a program note on "Robert Schumann and Romantic Literature"). "New" is, of course, one of the main terms in such a way of seeing: not mere newness itself, perhaps, but newness as a mark of genuine personality.

Perhaps, as regards the study of the genre, we might characterize the Rosenfeldian procedure thus: There is a dialectic working here. The critic starts with the genre; behind the genre he sees the temperament; then he goes in quest of the ways in which the genre expresses the temperament, and finally comes upon ways whereby the temperament transcends the genre.

You can see this development quite clearly, in considering one of Paul Rosenfeld's last and best pieces, his ardent appreciation of Sherwood Anderson (in his preface to *The Sherwood Anderson Reader*). Written in his customary generous, sensitive, and persuasive manner, it begins with a general, impressionistic characterization, likening Anderson's work to "field-flowers." The critic next proceeds to analysis in terms of literary genres: naturalism; the lyrical ("lyrics with epic characteristics, lyrics narrative of events"); "heroic feelings" (defined as "the impulse to feel out the destiny of a people and

affirm it in creating the ideal citizen"); the "bucolic, idyllic"; symbolism and mysticism.

But the next section of the essay, looking up these classifications as "the manifold of impulses at this work's roots," proceeds to talk of contrasted personality types:

Everybody nowadays is familiar with the theory of these fundamental human temperaments, respectively called tough-minded and tender-minded by William James, one of their students; extraverted and introverted by another, Carl Jung; cyclothymic and schizoid by Ernst Kretschmer; syntonio and schizoid by still others, Bleuler and A. A. Brill. More antithetical than masculinity and femininity, both temperaments are said also to some degree to be of the essence of every human being and in most beings to remain at loggerheads. One of them, by a combination of character and circumstance, often suffers ruinous suppression in the other's favor.

Applying this formula to Sherwood Anderson, Paul Rosenfeld says:

There presses upon us the hypothesis that Anderson's work derived its form from the circumstance that, stubbornly, irreducibly, the two great human temperaments and their reactions existed side by side in his psyche. Through others who similarly were medleys there often sounded the voices of one temperament. The voices of the other temperament were suppressed. Anderson on the contrary caused all of them to move contrapuntally. This in turn may have been the cause of his distinguishing ability to combine various points of view in his stories, and of his liberal attitude toward the world.

The psychologistic concern here reminds us, at every turn in Paul Rosenfeld's work, there is the suggestion that, behind

all genres and all temperaments, there lies the universal factor of the unconscious, the highest court of appeal in esthetic matters, and conceived by him to be in dialectical opposition to the logical and rational.

All told, I think we have been describing the literary methods of a critic strongly *idealistic* in his approach to the problem of the literary genre. And though I understand that Paul Rosenfeld had intended to write a book in which the various aspects of his concern with literary genres would be ultimately placed with reference to one another, and even left a manuscript in which some of this definitive readjusting has been done, the work now available is fragmentary, as judged from this point of view.

But even so, again and again, one comes upon evidence of Paul Rosenfeld's great ability to convey the warmth of human temperament in its struggles of esthetic piety, its act of thanksgiving that is implicit in the cult and practice of just expression.

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*William Schuman*

## VIRTUOSITY IN DISCERNMENT

IT WAS clear from his writings that Paul Rosenfeld was a man who reacted—a critic who loved and who was capable of being moved. He was not interested in music for its abstract technical

merits or the possibilities it afforded for speculative musico-logical erudition. How did it make him feel? This was what told him the quality of the work. But his feelings were not, and, of course, could not be divorced from his total life experience as artist and man. His understanding of form, rhythm, harmony, melody, color, was therefore natural and integrated.

To say, as have some, that because he was not a professionally schooled musician his reactions were essentially dilettante is to ignore the fact that he was what many a professional is not—a virtuoso listener. Furthermore, his broad intellectual equipment and vast practical experience in literature and the visual arts helped him to bring unique insights to music.

And so, a telephone call from him in the early part of 1938 with its self-effacing request for an interview was, for the young composer, an important event. Paul arrived at my apartment and proceeded at once to the point. He had a piece to do, he said, for a publication, not specifying which one, and he wanted to speak to me about some music of mine which he had heard. He then proceeded to say that he was not a musician and had no pretension at representing himself as such but that he listened to music a great deal and based his judgments, for better or worse, on his reactions. At his request I played him a transcription of my *Second Symphony*, made from a radio broadcast. I was amazed at two things: first, his ability to grasp the musical intentions and to objectify them in words without resorting to technical abstractions; second, I was amazed that he liked the piece. This same symphony had inspired some of the most insulting mail ever to be received by a major network, had caused (according to a press account) a near stampede on the part of a Baltimore audience, and, finally, had enjoyed the reputation of being perhaps the most hated symphony ever to

have been performed in Boston. Paul's favorable reaction was doubly astounding to me because I had considered the work in its existing form a noble failure, and had withdrawn it from further performance with the thought in mind that I would one day rewrite it. But Paul would hear none of this. He liked it the way it was and felt that it would be impossible at some distant point of maturity to recapture the intellectual and emotional climate in which the work was originally wrought. I know now how right he was, and if ever I do come back to this work, it will be only to use materials from it and develop them differently.

When Paul's article made its appearance, he cited an analogy between my *Second Symphony* and the *Bolero* of Ravel in the use of *ostinato* figures. This statement seemed to me an untenable one, and I discussed the matter with Paul, who decided that I was right. In a subsequent article in the *Musical Quarterly*, July, 1939, he wrote, "While the *ostinato* of the opening movement has an almost painful insistence, it differs thoroughly from that of Ravel's *Bolero*. There was continual melodic contrast and development." This willingness to revise a previous judgment in the light of newly discovered evidence was characteristic of Paul's lack of pettiness and serves as an apt illustration of his deep sincerity.

Paul's interest in my music declined in direct proportion to the increased recognition received. I was, at first, deeply concerned by this until I realized that no change of heart was necessarily implied.

Bit by bit I came to understand that in music, at least, his real interest seemed to be in the young and in the esoteric. It was as though, once established, the composer no longer needed him. This was the way it seemed to me. Whether or not the facts



actually justify this feeling, I cannot say. What I can say is that if Paul seemed to jump off the band wagon as others were climbing on, he certainly had every right to do so.

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*Lucie Wiese*

## MAN OF EMPATHY

BEFORE the altar of an artist's work a critic can take three attitudes.

1) He can survey the offering's outward sum, and state: 'Tis this or that.

2) He can assume the *Sum*, and assert: I like it yes, I like it no.

3) He can peer into the reredos of the artist's mind 'til he perceives the pattern of the tapestry, and then he can say: He means to say, and says it thus.

Rare is the critic who thus can leap the works and take upon himself the offset of the doer's design so that the *décalquage* becomes his very own, and what he reports becomes the valued counterfeit of what the creator sought.

This is the holding of a mirror up to creation. It is the sinking of the critic's ego and the sublimation of the artist's id.

Paul Rosenfeld (who in his childhood's lonely daydreams matched himself with the sun) had this empathetic reflection

to a superb extent, and depth. A mature critic, he kept himself so stripped of his own purports that those whose firstling works he scanned came to look upon him as their other selves, reflections that required no courtesy or special salute.

With reference to James Joyce he once remarked: "A parasite inhabits our poor skulls." This was Paul Rosenfeld's own mind, too, which made him live himself out through those wayward others. Beyond this, he became (as he also said of Marcel Proust) the stuff of fiction. He detached himself, and saw himself in three-dimensional perspective. He perceived the "silence and the loneliness in which each of us is condemned to play the supreme acts of his drama."

This was marvelous prescience for the ultimate supreme act of his own drama. For he was alone in a crowded movie house when his heart fluttered toward its soon final stillness.

Paul—Saul—he carried the creed of his perceptive empathy unto philistines and corinthians, and buttressed an aspired church on many an ungraved shore.

Yes. For young American artists of his time he engraved their hopes, and made them known, and somecase great. Always this required struggle. Let them then always remember that, above "the smoke of earth," Paul Rosenfeld still goes agonistic on.

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## SOCIOLOGICAL COMPULSION

THOSE who painfully remember the days following World War I, when Scott Fitzgerald introduced the "lost generation" and John Held drew its portrait, will recollect beneath the roar of the stock market, the bleating of flappers, the rhumba of cocktail shakers and the mad cacophonies of premature jazz, the still small voice of art insistently repeating a new and different message: *L'art est mort, vive l'art*. People were talking about the Armory Show, as it was called, where the U.S.A. gazed incredulous upon the now famous *Nude Descending the Stairs*, an abstract composition which would never have been noticed had it been called plainly, "Ascending Spiral." It had been thus entitled by some one of Marcel Duchamp's shrewder promoters, who had visited or else had reliable advice concerning the *Etats Unis* and its somewhat frontier attitudes. But sweet are the uses of advertisement, and today still the famous nude holds her place with the Boston Tea Party.

For the artists of this country, who, together with dodging dead cats and rotten tomatoes, were then laboring to sustain themselves and this new thing which has since become the significant art of our day, it would not be too much to say that Paul Rosenfeld was the herald and prophet. He was also the cherisher and comforter of poor and obscure artists in the fight for recognition, and many of these have survived and now lend

luster to American art. Among them one might mention John Marin, Arthur G. Dove, Alfred Maurer, Gaston Lachaise, Charles Demuth, Oscar Blümner.

Edmund Wilson wrote of him in 1925: "Mr. Rosenfeld has life to give away and he has so far devoted most of his career as a writer to making generous presents of it to his contemporaries."

Not only are we in his debt for having salvaged American talent from oblivion, but because he also helped prod us into an awareness of the new movements in music, art, and literature, and liberally educated us in understanding them. That the literary world understood this as early as 1920 is indicated by an article in *Current Opinion* which says of Rosenfeld: "For the new generation in music there has at last arrived an interpreter with the uncommon power of making the aims and achievements of the distinctly modern masters comprehensible to the musical layman."

This must have been a most thankless task in terms of temporal rewards. At just that moment America was not craving something new in art. We were doing awfully well. There were two chickens in every pot and two cars in every garage. Culture was in the bag. Where else in the world could one find so many fifty-story skyscrapers or whole colleges built new in the Gothic style? Art was then perhaps the smallest ham sandwich ever unwrapped at the world's biggest and noisiest banquet. What kept Rosenfeld from joining other sensitive, cultured artists like Whistler, Sargent, and Henry James on the Continent? That there were bad moments is revealed for example when he wrote, "The trip from the old to the new world upon which we are all in spite of ourselves embarked has gotten no further than a low smoky shore looking rather like the Bayonne littoral

from the Staten Island ferryboat on a sunless winter's day."

It was a scant year before the ghost of Paul Revere galloped a pallid steed from Wall Street to Washington, crying, "The consequences are coming," when Paul Rosenfeld thus metaphorically revealed his opinion of Coolidge culture and at the same time a pessimism and an understandable compulsion to be quit of the whole profitless business of leading the apathetic public horse to the sweet cool stream of art. Those were the days when esthetic malnutrition increasingly promoted an annual exodus of culture-lovers to European shores. And it was on the return trip, which some never made, that the "Sandy Hook Blues" so adequately and rather touchingly set forth above made itself felt.

For the art critic, there was then—in the 1920's—the problem of how to include our common man in a program initiated at the level of privilege, which had always been and in fact still was the source of the "patron" and hence of capital *A* Art-for-Art's-sake. Or perhaps it was more simply the problem of practicing brotherly love, in terms of art, of including in one's thinking the art needs of the whole population and not of one small fraction of the sovereign people.

The practice of medicine had followed a more humanistic development, including in its benefits ever more and commoner men while, reciprocally, respect for medicine has taken the place of vulgar prejudices that once assigned Dr. Quack and Old Sawbones to something worse than an Ivory Tower. In the world of art there is no corollary to this! For expert opinion dealing with another set of almost equally important values, also matters of life and death according to the opinion of other cultures—and I am referring to the spiritual values of art—

seems to be a matter of complete indifference to the majority.\* While this state of paralysis continues to grip the condition of art in American democracy, anxiety will continue to beset the critic. And for one not thinking of the total situation, it was easy to write, "We are in one of the periods of seeming death," as did Rosenfeld in his essay "The Sleeping Renaissance."

It was even more difficult when the already somewhat disorderly areas of esthetic thinking were rudely sideswiped by the unanticipated advent of the modern movement. Those citizens whose vague ideas about art were heavily imbued with the authoritarian attitudes of academicism, or else incrustated with eighteenth century aristocratic fixations, were not to say startled by signs of freedom among the lowly artists, like a regrettable jail-break or an insurrection in the slave quarters. It was touch and go. As this pre-New Deal hurricane blew among the intelligentsia and even occasionally did a bit of low moaning at the level of the common man (although this purely esthetic disturbance at first contained little to concern him), such critics as Royal Cortissoz elected to play the role of Horatius at the bridge while Rosenfeld wisely and honestly perceived duty to lie along the path of tolerance and liberalism. Courageously he dedicated himself to the hazardous task of publicly exercising responsible and independent judgment, made all the more difficult by one's now having to navigate new and uncharted seas of art where lurked the treacherous Picasso current as well as the Gertrude Stein reefs. In electing to pursue this course, he bolstered the waning cause of freedom during some of democracy's most Republican hours, performing therein and irrespective of all other considerations, a task which has

\*Of course our culture has, since the seventeenth century, conceded the position of art to be of little importance, whereas life and private property are constitutionally guaranteed.

placed us all in his debt. Wherefore Sherwood Anderson declared, "Of all American writers he is the one who is least afraid—unashamed of being fine and sensitive."

Exactly what made the critic's task so difficult was the lack of any esthetic component in our democratic philosophy. There was no significant art ideology, no critical criterion such as the Nazis used and the Communists in fact still use to direct artistic creativity to the ends of the state. There was nothing but a rough laissez-faire habit of art snobbery and intolerance which operated to sanction the academic and ignore the popular need for pleasure in art which to some extent we all share. Moreover, with the peculiar stress laid on the freedom of the individual, amounting to a compulsion where frontier attitudes have lingered, one fails to envision as at all possible any public approach to the exceedingly personal and emotional realm of art.

With us there has been lacking any technique for dealing with art directly on its own merits. Also little consideration has ever been directed towards the "art rights of man," according to democratic process, whence the art critic for the people, not just for the luxury traffic, might derive some right to be heard precisely as popular government derives its authority from the consent of the governed.

But if the artist can and will speak to his fellow countrymen at their level and about things of concern common to them, no interpreter is really needed. Mexico has helped us to see what art can mean to a people when it speaks to them about themselves. No protagonist was needed for the murals of Rivera and Orozco which opened for Mexicans like a picture book even though they were painted in an exceedingly modern manner. For North Americans the first taste of the radically new style came largely from Paris and at the same time dealt with

subject matter of small popular concern. Hence Paul Rosenfeld was obliged to start practically from scratch when he undertook to promote the case for modern art.

Rosenfeld's articles as they began to appear in early contributions to the *Nation* and the *New Republic* and in his two volumes of essays, *Port of New York* and *By Way of Art*, are largely leveled at a liberal intelligentsia accustomed to associate with art. That he was addressing himself to a somewhat select audience, which if restricted in numbers still carried considerable weight of prestige, is not to be overlooked. Such readers tended to be rather ahead of the traditional status quo and were on the whole ready to contemplate new ideas. But the task was none the less hard and at times discouraging, as we apprehend in many of Rosenfeld's early essays, where hope wrestles with disillusionment. Viewing the conservative prejudices isolating the group—Stieglitz, Marin, Hartley, and the others with whom he had identified himself—the occasional note of nostalgic loneliness is not amiss, for siege warfare against a powerful reactionary foe armed with noncomprehending contempt is far from invigorating. Surely one gets the impact of this encounter in a reference to New York. Speaking of the city, he writes: "Over our melancholy it rises high. It seems we have taken root. The place has gotten a gravity that holds us. The suction outward has abated. No longer do we yearn to quit New York."

What shall we say concerning his implicit attitude toward the potential reader, the common man to whom he appeals in the name of the artists he is attempting to champion? How wise it is to betray a feeling of antipathy as intolerant of the people as a whole as he assumes them to be of modern art, is a problem of fact. An instance of this attitude occurs when he



refers to Randolph Bourne as "a wedge of crimson into the dun, the timorousness, the cheap self-satisfaction of his community." One has the sense of a purely intellectual awareness of groups as well as a lack of compassion born of human contact at the common level.

The art critic in a democracy, whom the people understand and accept at the level of the democratic undertaking and from whom they will not shy away, ought perhaps to identify himself with making art more available and enjoyable rather than rare and less attainable.

Reading Rosenfeld's opinions on the lookout for evidence as to the nature of his own understanding of democracy, one reaches the conclusion that as of the 1920's democracy was not one of the topics of popular conversation. Perhaps it is because we were, even then, nearing the end of the honeymoon period of Republican individualism when promises and honeyed words would soon have to be backed up by more than a gesture in the direction of underprivilege. The cold shower of the New Deal was more invigorating to those who had never had one, even to the point of violence, than for those born under the cold faucet.

Prior to 1932, the rugged individual and all his works held the limelight. Intellectuals discussed equality, but academically, and the lot of the people as a whole was not headline material. In his attitude toward individuals Rosenfeld reflects the optimism of laissez-faire which never ceased to hope that all these entertaining individuals would, although they never had done so, voluntarily coalesce in shoulder-to-shoulder effort in the common cause, when the occasion arose. Do not be misled into thinking that this has little to do with art or art criticism since these but mirror the pattern of our progress toward brother-

hood. He most interestingly dwells on the unique and individual characteristics of his subjects, rarely emphasizing common or universal traits. This reflects precisely where we were then. It is true of course that Rosenfeld may have been saluting other bloody but unbowed heads towering among the "philistines" and thus must not pass unmarked by our sympathy.

Thinking in this vein, one necessarily tends to stress what sets one individual apart from his fellows rather than the common identifying bonds. This is clearly a romantic hang-over, based on the "thrill" principle inherent in contrast and remoteness.

Rosenfeld discovers no dearth of this type of individualism among the artists for whom he feels most kinship. For example, he begins his essay on Marsden Hartley by acclaiming "that gaunt eagle from the hills of Maine." Marin he hails as "the good American individualist," and goes on to state that Marin remained "pretty consistently, essentially unconcerned for his neighbors." He reinforces his enthusiasm for this somewhat dubious human quality by calling it "this delightful indifference." Now, the country doctor striving to build his practice could not afford to act so.

What he has to say about Stravinsky penetrates to the core of the issue of art-content vis-a-vis democracy. The sensitive individual artist's perception of a certain landscape has value only for people who too feel that way or who have been converted to so doing. By contrast, Rosenfeld tells us, "Stravinsky relinquished the expression of the *singular* (that is, ivory-tower content), the subjective, the remote in favor of the commonplace (what we call universal), the external, even the banal." And he concludes: "The *general experience* was *again* of in-

terest." Note that he says "again," in which he is referring to what he calls the "new humanism" to be found in Stravinsky's later works.

Now that has an entirely different ring from the "delightful indifference" of Marin or from his recognition of Hartley as "a painter," irrespective of what the painter paints. Did Marin or Hartley paint the "singular" experience or the "general" experience? It made little difference then in view of the major issues involved in the campaign Rosenfeld was helping wage, that campaign being to win a hearing for new ideas, fresh material in both of which Hartley and Marin abounded, in the face of a public twenty years behind Europe in its esthetic awareness.

One of the responsibilities incurred by the art critic writing at the journalistic level would appear to be that of progressively educating and broadening the tastes of his constituents. Where else will they obtain the knowledge requisite to responsible independence of judgment in artistic as well as civic situations?

Realizing his opportunity here, Rosenfeld chose to promote two themes. One was to keep the gates of the mind open to new ideas, not indiscriminately to be sure but prepared to receive evidence. The other was to provide the evidence, a task to which, because of his own peculiar responsiveness, he appears to have been exceptionally qualified. Here was a service of eminent importance to any democratic group, and with all the powers of his gift as a writer, Rosenfeld understood and undertook the function of liberalizer and expounder.

His exposition was achieved, not through scholarly analysis (otherwise academically appropriate) or by recourse to the authority of art history, but by pure lyrical expressive writing

wherein his sympathetic response (reaction) to the efforts to which he exposed himself led to a bass accompaniment well played in harmony with the main theme, setting it off, echoing it, elaborating and expounding it, but creatively. He achieves what is effectively a translation into his own prose of the intentions of his artist subject. In the instance of Gertrude Stein he even imbibes some of her literary style and there is an amusing tendency at that point for some of his writing to become suffused, even confused by spontaneous "vocabulizing."

Writing so, he achieves a thoroughly informative exposition of Gertrude Stein at the upper popular level of awareness. He refrains from invoking authority, yet pursuing his theme with a mixture of logic and insight revealing careful study and thought, he at length succeeds in making painlessly clear the operational basis of Stein's method, in other words why a "rose is a rose is a rose." He is speaking for someone who needs only to be heard. And so, for Marin and for Hartley and O'Keeffe and above all Stieglitz, he becomes the lyrical apologist, the interpreter whose sensitiveness, imagination, and intuition enable him to invoke the feelings of the reader, bringing him ultimately to the point of sharing in a new experience.

As a responsible guardian of American art, Rosenfeld adventured with the artists in whom he believed. He sat in their shivering bivouacs, shared their hopes, then went to press and laid their case before his readers. If disillusionment occasionally showed between the lines, so did freshness of spirit to penetrate the disguise of the new and different and to perceive the living thing. So did courage to continue in this campaign which he lived to see aborted by world convulsion, convulsion originating in that dangerous 1920 blind spot in the democratic eye. No ardent equalitarian himself, he however fought

against the entrenched abuses of the "art rights of man" in the name of his own integrity, which derived its authority from belief in freedom.

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*Francis Steegmuller*

## PARALLEL IN ART CRITICS

JAMES JACKSON JARVES is the man whose collection of Italian paintings, chiefly primitives, which he gathered together in Florence in the 1850's and 60's, hangs in the Yale University Art Gallery. They are visited there respectfully, but even today not very popularly, and Jarves had brought them home to his native land and exhibited them with very little appreciation indeed in New York and Boston before selling them to Yale for a pittance. Jarves isn't well remembered—the only biographical article of consequence that has been published about him, by TheodoreSizer, is quite appropriately called "A Forgotten New Englander." \* But the comparatively rare people who visit the collection, and the even rarer people who look into Jarves' books, are given an awareness, by what they see or read, that here was an American in the America of yesterday who devoted himself to art, and to spreading the gospel of art in his country.

\* *The New England Quarterly*, Vol. VI, No. 2, 1933.

The career of Paul Rosenfeld is so reminiscent in several ways of Jarves' that to listen to accounts of the two of them is like listening to two similar though deviating stories; and one of the more amusing facts incidental to their resemblance is that it is Rosenfeld's novel, *The Boy in the Sun*, that brings some of the likenesses most strongly to mind.

*The Boy in the Sun* is quite a good novel, if one isn't put too far off by the author's tortuous style, by his tendency to indulge in phraseology of more secretive significance than anything in Henry James and far less mellifluous. But that is a characteristic of Rosenfeld's writing in all his books; it is there, and one accepts it or not, as one chooses. It doesn't make for a winning narrative style in a novel, and one is glad to come upon chapters in *The Boy in the Sun* where Rosenfeld apparently forgot himself and let the story of his young man be clear as well as interesting. The boyhood in the respectable house on "A Hundred and Twenty-First," the "Wagner conductor" at Sunday dinner and the early consciousness of other arts, the trip to Europe, poor Pappa as a ruined and despised widower among the in-laws, the beautiful half-English Evelyn. . . . Many far poorer volumes have been written and are being written every day, by men and women who consider themselves novelists—as Rosenfeld certainly did not consider himself.

Now it so happens that like the boy in the sun on "A Hundred and Twenty-First"—whom one suspects to be rather close to the young Rosenfeld—Jarves too was brought up in a respectable bourgeois household, this one on Boylston Street. And among the Jarveses as among the Rosenfelds there was more than a glimmer of interest in esthetic matters, for the senior Jarves was, after all, the inventor of the famous Sandwich Glass and loved the shapes and colors of his ware. And it

happens that not only is the family background in *The Boy in the Sun* similar to what we know of Jarves', but Jarves, too, in the midst of his art criticism, wrote a novel. It is a very different one from Rosenfeld's, and is called *Kiana: a Tradition of Hawaii*, and is laid "about the year 1530." Jarves had spent some years in Hawaii in his youth and written a history of the place; and later, having installed himself in Florence, he made a novel of one of the Hawaiian legends of early European castaways. It makes us smile, with its air of heavily watered Chateaubriand, its saccharine keepsake tone. But although there is no indication that it was popular, we know that it interested at least one of Jarves' contemporaries:

"I received, soon after meeting you at the Athenaeum, the three attractive-looking volumes you were kind enough to send me," Emerson wrote Jarves in 1857. "... Such is our curiosity about those famed savages, that, I confess, I began with the romance. . . ." One of the other two books that Jarves had sent Emerson was undoubtedly the first of his missionary books on art, *Art Hints*, for in his letter Emerson also says, "The very accepting of this topic of fine art bespeaks elevation and generosity, and before all reading, we are engaged on your side." Emerson may have read *Art Hints*—one hopes he did for his own sake, for it was a lively and enthusiastic little book and still is—but there is no record of his having done so: no record of his having dipped into anything of Jarves' except "the romance," as no doubt there are readers—though perhaps not modern Emersons—who have looked at nothing of Rosenfeld's except *The Boy in the Sun*.

Jarves wrote another volume that was more reminiscent than *Kiana* of Rosenfeld's story of a boyhood: this time a production that makes no claim to be a novel and is unclassifiable—a

strange kind of pseudo-autobiography, very entertaining indeed, called *Why and What Am I?* In this Jarves begins with his memories of life in the womb—a startling beginning in a book of that day, and one reluctantly but doubtless properly characterized by Mrs. Browning (a friend of Jarves', though her husband was not) as "coarse."

But of course the major resemblance between these two Americans is their complete devotion to art and their constant striving to bring art to America and into the consciousness of Americans. Rosenfeld, choosing not to supplement his small income with a salary, but rather to write as he liked about any painter or musician he thought worthy of notice, is like a latter-day reincarnation of Jarves, who spent on paintings that nobody liked the money he *expected* to inherit from his father, usurped the best room in the house as a gallery for his "wiry madonnas" and his Saint Jeromes, and never saw to it that there was enough money left over from picture-buying to spend on things his wife and children needed or wanted. When shipped to America, the collection aroused laughter or met with indifference; neither in New York nor Boston were Jarves' partisans able to raise as much as \$50,000 to acquire the pictures as the nucleus of a permanent art museum (this was before the founding of either the Fine Arts Museum or the Metropolitan); and finally, desperately in debt, Jarves let the paintings go to Yale for \$22,000—a fraction, he said, of what he had spent. A few men—Charles Eliot Norton was one of them—congratulated Yale and sympathized with Jarves; but in general both were jeered at. Re-establishing his financial position as best he could—when his father died his share in the estate amounted to little, and he himself was hopelessly incapable of making money—Jarves collected more pictures and wrote more books, and at



his death in 1888 he was an advisor to the young Metropolitan. Some of the purchases which he recommended—notably some nineteenth century Italian sculpture—have not stood the test of time, and he saw no beauty in Géricault, Delacroix, or Manet; amid the art of his own time he lacked the well-nigh flawless taste and perception of a Rosenfeld. But on the other hand, in his later books he took many a pot shot at the reputations of American painters who were busy covering acres of canvas with views of the Hudson; and *The Art Idea* and *Art Thoughts* are filled with interesting comment on art through the ages, up to the art of landscaping Central Park, building clipper ships, and arranging window displays in shops.

Jarves and Rosenfeld were heroes, in their way; at least they were devotees, and to be devotees of unpopular art in their country and in their periods demanded personal sacrifices for which the word heroic is perhaps not too strong. There have been other such heroes in America and there are some here now—self-appointed, poorly paid, outspoken fighters for art. Without such essential protagonists any country, any age is the poorer. Let us help them flourish!

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RIPOSTE ON STYLE \*

PAUL ROSENFELD's style is not simplified from that of the Victorian prose-writer, but complicated, intensified, knotted up, tangled up, speeded up.

Mr. Rosenfeld is a critic to be reckoned with. He is a sort of follower of Huneker—the introducer of great foreign names in music, painting, letters, and the generous discoverer of American pioneers in all the arts. He writes much better than Huneker, and he has a much sharper mind. His critical essays are original creations in thought and expression, at the same time that they interpret, criticize, and appraise. He has the faculty of making you think you know a composer or a painter whom you have never heard or seen. I have never seen a picture of Marsden Hartley, but I shall recognize without a label the first one I come upon. Do I not know “those great pears, bedded upon hospital-white linen on a background of severe dry black”; have I not lived through Hartley's New Mexico in Rosenfeld's description—“with its strange depraved topography . . . strawberry-pink mountains dotted by fuzzy poison-green shrubs, recalling breasts and wombs of clay; clouds like sky-sailing feather beds; boneyard aridity”? Mr. Rosenfeld is that rare thing, a critic that approaches a work of art as a work of art;

\* From *The Outlook for American Prose*, by Joseph Warren Beach, University of Chicago Press, 1926. Reprinted by permission of the author.

and he has probably succeeded in several dozen essays in avoiding the use of the words "moral" and "realistic." He has the faculty of intensely admiring great talents without losing his head and growing blind to their defects. He can tell you what is the matter with James Joyce without minimizing his greatness. He can find the falsity in a writer without the application of dry, infertile formulas of "humanism" and "naturalism."

He brings to his writing a prodigious imagination, an intensity at once of thought and sensation, an oriental opulence and profusion and bizarrerie. He has all the jargon of the studios, which would be dry stuff did he not water it with deluges of poetical imagery. We may call him a futurist in style. His pages have all the force and rush and confusion of a modern street scene; they are the literary counterparts of steam engines, skyscrapers, steel mills, electric signs, whirling wheels, and circling searchlights. There is the perpetual flare of Roman candles and the sizz and pop of skyrocket. He uses the English language with the freedom of a cave man using a woman. He stretches our idioms to fit every need of expression, makes it stand on its head, joining words together in strange, illicit unions, and piling metaphor on metaphor. He has no pity.

The Chinese knew themselves *intergrown with* all creation, knew no thing not intergrown with them, and their wisdom symbolized itself in the completeness and harmoniousness, the *balancedness* of their expressions. The great modern Frenchmen saw the world so, and accepted it fully, ugliness and pain and beauty alike, and their wisdom became the *impeccable* organization, the *exquisite* balance that *enthralls* us before the canvases of Cézanne and Renoir. But to this

New England work [he is speaking of Marsden Hartley] the same wisdom has not always contributed. The object has in some fashion remained always subordinate to the worker. It has been considered essentially an inferior thing, with the unique function of demonstrating some *ineffable* quality which is *sensed* present in the person regarding far more than in the substance regarded.

To my conservative taste the convenience of such a word as "balancedness" is no excuse for its employment; it is simply too horrid, too impossible to say, and our language is plastic enough to furnish ways of saying the thing without it. As for "sensed present," I recognize the economy and force gained, but there is a point where force and economy must yield to pleasantness of sound and immediate lucidity of meaning. The words "impeccable," "exquisite," "enthalls," and "ineffable" I have italicized because they are words which betray the somewhat forced and factitious character of Mr. Rosenfeld's energy. They are not the most characteristic feature of his writing, but they are characteristic, and they are unpleasantly suggestive of the gush that weakens the work of Huneker and all his kind. The danger of the futurist is not his strength but the forcing of his strength. And there is a strength in quiet reserve as well as in shouting and waving of arms.

I have lingered so over Mr. Rosenfeld because he is not the sole one of his kind, but merely the most brilliant of a kind which is very large in numbers. . . .

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## SPUR AGAINST COMPLACENCY

THE IMPORTANCE of sensitive appreciators within any culture is frequently overlooked. These appreciators provide a sort of density in the intellectual climate. Without such men and women who do not compete, who do not, one must almost say, succeed, except on their own sensitive terms and in their own gentle and unassuming way, a culture can exist, but remains crude. It has no delicacy, no shading, no depth.

Paul Rosenfeld was such an appreciator. His noncompetitive gentleness was so apparent that the strength and integrity of his spirit could easily go unnoticed. He never put on professional airs and graces; and his work never wholly lost the tone of the enthusiastic amateur who writes for his own pleasure. He was never diverted into false attitudes toward the arts with which he dealt, since he worked out of a deep love and an ineradicable interest for those arts. He was able, often, to go straight to the heart of a talent because the nonessential did not interest him. And in his later years he could write lucid expository prose concerning some of the most baffling modern music. He was an impressionist in the best sense: one who actually has, and cultivates, impressions.

Paul was both gentle and happy. Having discovered early what he was and what he wanted to do, he showed few signs of restlessness or frustration.

He had made his break into self-knowledge in a period when every circumstance in the American background was opposed to the possibility of such enlightenment. Born in 1890, he belonged to a sort of "intergeneration" in American life and culture. The first lull after a "century of progress" was heavy upon the land. It was a period when material techniques had come to an awkward standstill. A cast-iron crudity ran through the time like a partially concealed armature. A cultural naïveté of a far from concealed kind paralleled the industrial crudity. The United States was emerging from a rural into a more urban culture, a culture in which most of its inhabitants felt ill at ease. The pretentiousness of concentrated money that had characterized the seventies and eighties was wearing off; a flimsy façade of middle-class pretension had begun to cover a larger area.

Simplicity of design either in common or decorative objects did not exist. A feeble yet gaudy skittishness—the skittishness of the suburb and the bungalow "development"—began to spread thinly all over America. Furniture appeared "genuinely" veneered with wafers of bird's-eye maple, even of mahogany. There was also the packing-case style admired as Mission. On their surfaces floated objects of bamboo, gilt wicker, plaster, paper and glue, burned leather and wood, punched brass, hand-painted china. An "arts-and-crafts" touch was added by little books bound in limp suède. Gas mantles threw down a green radiance from central "chandeliers" made of brass tubing; the occasional electric bulb glowed dull and flickering. Boston ferns, or, sometimes, potted palms in "jardinières" stood on "tabourets"; beneath lay the aniline "art-square." The pictures which hung against glaring wallpaper, even when "hand-painted in oils," seemed of factory manufacture.

The residential streets of American cities and towns echoed to the strumming of "piano pieces," especially badly composed, it seemed, so that they would be badly played by badly taught pupils on badly tuned pianos.

Every cultural fault and absurdity that a European industrialized society had run through slightly earlier, appeared in feeble facsimile in America. Here a new people, just beginning to be ashamed of immigrant or rural origins, in the 1900's began to cover that shame by tacking together as quickly as possible a culture out of bits and pieces, wishing to approximate in the shortest possible time and over the largest possible extent of space an imperfectly envisaged ideal of gentility and the good life. Looking back, one can even be touched by this ambition.

The awkwardness and thinness of this material scene was matched by the situation in the field of letters. American literature was saturated with a seedy conservatism, just beginning to be broken by a sensational naturalism on the one hand, and a gaudy journalism on the other. A line of rather exhibitionist esthetic appreciation began with Huneker (who cared little or nothing for American writing). This line extended into the work of several young journalists, notably the young Mencken who, with George Jean Nathan and Willard Huntington Wright, managed, before 1914, briefly to transform a pulp magazine, the *Smart Set*, into an isolated lively cultural force. This sort of breezy and profane journalist attack did a good deal toward breaking up the rigidities and exposing the intellectual shallowness of the time. Some deeper and purer impulse had to come into being, however, before any true cultural change could occur.

By 1916 Paul Rosenfeld and others were ready to apply this

sort of impulse. That was the year when they brought out the *Seven Arts*. Shortly before this, in 1913, Paul had fled from that American fetish—"a steady job"—as well as from his native shores. In Italy, in Florence, he discovered "the first friendly and delectable environment" he had ever known. From this he came back to America eager to help create at least the beginnings of such an environment in his native country. "We need lives lived to the full amid the crass matter of the land. . . . It was beauty in America one wanted, not in France or Switzerland." Soon his faith in the possibility of a true and diversified American culture began to be justified by the appearance of a handful of American artists in several fields. The *Dial* gave further impetus. "For the first time among these modern men and women," he wrote in 1924, "I found myself in an America where it was good to be." And he at once gave credit for this change where credit was indeed due. "If today men and women on American land are commencing to come into relationship with one another and with the places in which they dwell, it is through the labor of some dozens of artist hands."

What may be called the bohemianization of the American middle class became very nearly complete in the ten years after 1918. During this process new dangers opened before the critical intelligence. As it was almost impossible to breathe in the stifling atmosphere of the 1900's, so it was difficult not to make mistakes of exaggeration and exuberance in the post-1918 *mêlée*. The number of false reputations and sham artists produced by that violent revolution in taste and manners is a matter of record. Paul Rosenfeld has been blamed for over-enthusiasm of tone and overlushness of style. Because he was never harsh or coarse in his perceptions a certain degree of overenthusiasm may be forgiven him; we are always right when



we do not judge the gentle and the sincere by too strict rules. As a matter of fact, Paul's steadiness of taste and justness of insight appeared early and unmistakably in *Port of New York* (1924). The men and women he then chose as true American artists, with one or two exceptions (and these are explained by Paul's love and loyalty toward his friends), today bear out his judgment, as they stand in the light of what has become American literary and artistic history.

Having found his work, Paul continually rejoiced to find others with the same interests as his own. Competitive jealousy was not in him. He was incapable of being distorted or disfigured by the rancors of ambition. His last work echoes the generous enthusiasm of the first. He was privileged to read, to listen to, to see the work of his contemporaries. In a country whose culture had so recently been provincial, rigid, sour, and thin, any new manifestation of creative energy gave him joy.

I frequently saw Paul, during the last years of his life, in the reading room of the New York Public Library central building. He was never surrounded by an elaborate paraphernalia of notebooks, index cards and the like. He usually sat with a book before him, reading. After a long working afternoon he was always delighted to talk. The last time we met was during the War. Paul invited me to have a drink with him; and we went to the Forty-Second Street Schrafft's, I remember. There, in the slightly suburban atmosphere, Paul, with his shy smile and in his gentle voice, related to me a parable which I have since thought of many times, in varying circumstances.

A wise man (he said) passed by a field and heard a terrible uproar and commotion. A snake was frightening some chil-

dren by attacking them without provocation. The wise man began to reason with the aggressive creature. The snake listened, and promised to mend its ways. A year later the wise man again passed by the corner of the same field. He called out a greeting to the snake. He was answered by a feeble voice; and soon saw the battered and torn form of the snake crawling to meet him.

"What has happened to you," the wise man exclaimed, "that I find you in this beaten-up condition?"

"You told me that I must not fight," said the snake, "and the news spread; and my enemies have made a habit of attacking me regularly and in force."

"Ah," said the wise man, "I told you not to fight, but I did not forbid you to hiss a little."

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*Malcolm Cowley*

## ST. MARTIN'S CLOAK

I WASN'T ever a close friend of Paul's, and I'm sorry to put on record that my last contact with him was an epistolary battle between us in which Paul didn't show up as well as I had hoped. He said in a review, and kept insisting in letter after letter, that Louis Aragon was a Vichy Frenchman and next door to being a collaborator with the Germans. Aragon has been guilty

of some literary sins, but that sort of collaboration was never one of them; and when Paul kept repeating this baseless charge, against all the evidence, he put himself out on a limb that was easy to saw off. That was his weak side, his obstinacy, and perhaps it explains why he clung to his extravagantly bejeweled style long after the fashions had changed and prose was being worn without decorations. I suspect that he used to go through Roget's *Thesaurus* collecting unusual words like a crow hoarding bits of shiny metal. "Lithic"—how often that elegant adjective appeared in his writing when he simply meant "hard" or "solid." It led to several disputes on the *New Republic* staff, with Edmund Wilson and me defending Paul against our colleagues. "Let's be *lithic* with Rosenfeld," one of them said, "and tell him we can't print his pieces until he gets rid of his fancy synonyms." Paul wouldn't change, and the result was that his musical criticisms—the most generous and perceptive that were being written—slowly disappeared from magazines of general circulation.

His obstinacy was a virtue when it led to persistence in a good but unprofitable and even self-destructive course of action. There is an awkward word that carries the highest praise we can give to a critic in these selfish times: he was *unself-protective*. He would at any moment sacrifice his own interests to defend what he admired in music, literature, or painting. One passage in Valéry's essay on the Symbolist (in *Variety I*) describes Paul at his best. "In the profound and scrupulous worship of all the arts," Valéry said, "they thought to have found a discipline, and perhaps a truth, beyond the reach of doubt. A kind of religion was very nearly established." Paul was a profound and scrupulous worshiper of all the arts and at times he was almost saintly. He often divided his cloak, like St. Martin,

giving half of it to some needy person who could write or paint or compose.

It is easy enough for artists to be generous when they are riding the crest of the wave, but misfortunes often make them crabbed and self-centered. Paul was generous in his good days and his bad days alike. Perhaps he gave away more money and time than he spent for himself. One of his characteristic undertakings was his *Sherwood Anderson Reader*, which he edited carefully and for which he wrote a long introduction to reaffirm the value of Anderson's work at a time when it was falling into neglect. Paul himself had then fallen into greater neglect, but he put aside his other plans and spent some of his last months working on this monument to a friend. Now, with what it gives us of the old days on the *Seven Arts*, it has become Paul's monument, too.



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*Part Three*

TESTIMONY

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AN ANOMALY IN LITERARY NEW YORK

THE OTHER day somebody asked me where I had met Paul Rosenfeld and how long ago. I think I remember the time and the place but I cannot be sure. The year was almost certainly 1926, the place a speakeasy on Thirteenth Street just east of Seventh Avenue; and I need scarcely say it was in New York. Edmund Wilson, I think, introduced us, and the three of us dined together; but this is all that I remember of the evening. Where I saw Paul next I am not sure either; but it was not long before we were friends. My wife and I began to attend his Sunday evenings in Irving Place, and it was there that I met Aaron Copland (I have not met him since) and first heard some of his music, played by the composer. I suppose I am vague about the beginnings of my friendship with Paul because I have felt in recent years that I had always known him. He was a singularly undramatic man who was concerned with things outside him, not with himself; one remembers his warmth and intelligence, but seldom their particular occasions. One of his great services to the arts was to bring people together (he knew who should be brought together) and his "evenings," at which he often cooked the meal, were as perfectly, if not so completely, an expression of himself as his writings.

At the time I met him he was planning, with Van Wyck Brooks, Alfred Kreymborg, and Lewis Mumford, to get out



the first *American Caravan*, and I very much wanted to be in it. I suppose I made his days and nights miserable trying to get him to accept my poems and trying to persuade him to publish poems and stories by other unknown persons. I believe I succeeded in all these campaigns, and I am sure that Paul was grateful for my victory. (These persons are still alive and must remain anonymous.) In the first *American Caravan* appeared my "Ode to the Confederate Dead," which has got around more than any other poem I have written: to Paul I owe its public existence, for every literary magazine of any standing in New York, and some elsewhere, had rejected it. That kindness alone would have been enough to fix him permanently in a grateful memory.

One evening late in 1927, or perhaps early in 1928, he rang our bell at 27 Bank Street, and as I let him in I saw that he was excited. His eyes flashed with anger. But with his unfailing politeness he remained silent until I had taken his coat and offered him a chair. "You have hurt very deeply a dear friend of mine," he said quietly. "How?" I asked. I couldn't imagine what I had done. "Your review of ———'s book has prostrated him. I have been sitting at his bedside. He is crushed." Then, of course, I knew. "Yes, but the book is very, very bad," I said. Paul suddenly sat erect, his eyes flashing again. "It is bad," he said, "but you needn't have made a fool of the author."

I tell this anecdote because I believe it has in it a little of the secret of Paul Rosenfeld (I ignore its revelation of myself)—the conflict in his character that caused him deep suffering and an honorable frustration. No considerations of kindness or personal loyalty would have let him defend a book, a picture, a score that he thought bad; and likewise the defects of a work of art could not justify, in his kind heart, the tough reviewing

tactics of the young savages of my generation, who were just then appearing in the literary magazines. Over many years I heard Paul say so often that it must have been a settled conviction, that the best attack on the bad is the loving understanding and exposition of the good. There is much to be said for that point of view—in a better world than the one in which he lived. In a world of commercialized literary success he was not comfortable, and he never had any communication with that world. He remained to the end an anomaly of literary New York: a man of cosmopolitan education whose innocence was as pure as it had been the day he was born.

It was out of this wonderful innocence that he sometimes became impatient with me and with other men my age, for our lack of piety toward the arts, and I suppose for a certain cruelty in our treatment of persons whom we did not respect, or even in our treatment of one another. One summer about ten years ago, when he was visiting me, he said about another friend, a poet, who was also a guest, that he was "not enough in love." I was struck by the phrase but at first I didn't see its implications: Paul's language I nearly always had to translate into something more rationalistic, and colder. He meant, of course, that our friend was not sufficiently dedicated. Had he not—Paul went on—only last night recited one of his best poems in a mock Southern accent (a New Englander's version) in such a way as almost to parody his own beautiful work? I tried to convince Paul that fine work cannot be compromised by parody but is rather strengthened by it, that only the second-rate fails to survive the ordeal of irony. But he was not convinced. He felt the mission of the artist to be, in our time, almost priestly, for art was the last medium of deep communication left to civilized men and men of good will.

I sometimes thought that he took too seriously the artist as man, and that had he been compelled to make Yeats' choice between "perfection in the life or in the work," he would have chosen perfection in the life. I think he actually made that choice; for his life, quiet, steady, almost retired, consistent and elevated in tone, with the greatest sensitivity along with the greatest personal responsibility, had its own inner perfection. He had achieved it early; and I felt, after more than twenty years, that here was a man who had been born to listen and to be wise. He held fixed opinions (which did not restrain his curiosity) and these, I believe, tended to make him in some very general sense an expressionist in art. Poetry for him came out of some pure source of being—one of our last conversations was about Plotinus—and was first of all lyrical: there was much in modern American poetry that he did not like (my own included) because it was ridden with conflict and irony; but his remarkable detachment and his sense of historical reality permitted him to understand the appearance of the ironic spirit in our age; and he gave it its just estimate.

His point of view had been formed before the first World War in the period of the *Seven Arts*, a magazine and a movement which were in the background of my generation but which had little direct influence upon us. It had seemed to me, before I came to New York in 1924, to represent an enthusiastic but remote conception of native American materials for the arts, even a European conception, like Waldo Frank's in *The Rediscovery of America*; but perhaps it was only the product of New York, a city which at that time quite as much as now seemed to me to have very little connection with the United States. There was, then, when I first knew Paul, something in his attitude that perplexed me, and it was hard to talk to him;

I felt later that I, too, as he saw me, was "not enough in love." He was serious and conscious about "America," which I no doubt took too much for granted because I didn't know any other country. Paul was so serious about America in those days that I sometimes thought he looked upon me as a wild piece of Americana which it was his duty to collect. But if Paul had not collected us I do not know who would; and there is no doubt that the movement he stood for had made it possible for people all over the country, who perhaps had never heard of it, to feel more confident of their immediate lives as the subjects of literature.

When I came back to New York to live in the spring of 1946, Paul was my neighbor, just around the corner on Eleventh Street, and it was not long before we were looking in on each other. One day I handed him the pianoforte parts to the Mozart violin sonatas, and we agreed that we should play together in about ten days—after he had "practiced up," he added with characteristic modesty. Then one Sunday he was to come to us for dinner. After we had waited until about nine thirty we decided that he had forgotten it. My wife thought it considerate not to remind him; so she decided not to telephone him but to invite him again in a few days; for even the appearance of discourtesy in his behavior distressed him. Two days later Marion Cummings telephoned us from New Hampshire to ask us to send flowers, for her and Estlin, to Paul's funeral. That was how, in New York, in 1946, one heard about the death of one's old friend and new neighbor. I never saw him after I gave him the Mozart sonatas. It would have been a rare pleasure to play them with Paul Rosenfeld.

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## REPRISE FROM VIENNA

BEFORE I arrived in the United States, the name of Paul Rosenfeld was quite unknown to me, although I had a considerable acquaintance with some of the noted music critics of this country. I had been especially impressed by the writings of James Huneker and admired his colorful style, his sensitiveness, his imagination. The famous pianist, Moritz Rosenthal, on returning from one of his annual concert tours to the States, gave me Huneker's *Chopin* book. And I was really interested. I, myself, had grown up as a writer in the epoch when French impressionistic poets were reveling in soft shades of words. I had spent two years in Paris, where Verlaine was still sitting behind a glass of absinthe on one of the cafe terraces of the *Quartier Latin* and when Debussy was publishing his first songs in the *Revue Blanche*—the literary magazine of all searching and sensitive artists. Thus I met in the writings of Huneker a related kind of artistic feeling. He was a writer of my own generation. He loved the beauty of precious words as I did. He (being a modern romanticist) loved art as a higher form of life. He appreciated artists who went their own way.

Some time ago in New York a lady of high culture gave me a volume by Paul Rosenfeld when we were discussing the transformation of the noble art of music criticism from a literary artwork to the banal handicraft of fast-running reporters. I

am an old journalist and liked the exciting atmosphere of newspaper offices in Vienna. I always appreciated the hunter's instincts of good reporters, their sharp eye, their skill in catching life. But all this is not music criticism, which after all is an art of ideas, expressed in literary style and form. Unfortunately, the development of the great dailies in Europe and in the United States has everywhere debased the art of music criticism, as the registration of the events of the day got an always increased tempo and there was no more time to deliberate. No time to form opinions, or to discuss esthetic problems, when the great machines were roaring and the paper was flowing through the machines with growing rapidity.

But when I started reading the books by Paul Rosenfeld (and after reading the first book, I read almost all of his writings), I learned: this man was a critic. There is personality in his writing. Every word was coined by a spirit possessing his own form. Opinions, judgments, impressions were new and independent. The literary language was quite different from the language of the other great American music critics. It had not the spiritual clarity of Philip Hale, or the motley colors of Huneker, or the lyricism of Lawrence Gilman. It was, notwithstanding all sensitiveness, a strong language; and notwithstanding all directness, a fanciful language. The man who wrote the books that I read with growing interest was a writer. That means a man who wants to impress readers with words, as a great violinist wants to impress listeners with the sounds he produces with his bow. Behind the words were opinions and convictions, clear understanding of the time in which the critic was living and of the spiritual fights engaging his energies. Thus Paul Rosenfeld certainly represented a noble and civilizing type of musical criticism. When I heard about his sud-

den death, I knew that the artistic life of New York had lost one of its strongest personalities and best critics—to whom I was indebted for hours of enlightenment, stimulation, and instruction, and in whom written words had become again what they should be: spiritual energy, the heart and the brains of a man, and—if necessary—a sword in the hands of a fighter.

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*Alfred Frankenstein*

## CRITIC'S SHEAF

PAUL ROSENFELD was both the most and the least journalistic of American music critics. He was the most journalistic in that the whole effect and contrivance of his work is of the immediate sensation served up fresh and sparkling. He was the least journalistic in that the commonplace concerns of ordinary music-reporting interested him not at all. For most of us, music criticism means how Rubinstein played the Tchaikovsky concerto last night, but, as far as I can discover, there are only three articles about interpreters in the entire range of Rosenfeld's work.

Rosenfeld never had to make his living as a music critic, and so he could center his attention upon the one aspect of the business that really matters—the musically creative life of the critic's own time. He made some mistakes, overrated some com-

posers, underrated or misunderstood some others, but in most cases his perceptions were marvelously keen and his expression of what he perceived was superbly apt: often, indeed, his *mots justes* were like small initial bursts which set off chain reactions in the reader's own mind.

His greatest weakness was his essentially romantic conception of what takes place when music is brought into being. He was not, like James Gibbons Huneker, a magnificent hack driven by satiety and overwork to an indifferent, reckless kind of hedonism. But his philosophy of music history and his psychology of music composition were, for all the questioning seriousness of his mind and the broad scope of his experience, somewhat naïve.

This is particularly true of his earlier work, although he was never completely free of that naïveté. Still and all, he did grow up with his time, and a review of his music criticism provides a double and parallel interest. Rosenfeld's music criticism is both a record of music creativity in the three decades, 1916–1946, and a record of the progress of his own mind.

However interesting it might be to trace the objective history of music through Rosenfeld's pages—especially the emergence of new composers and the decay and fading of others—that interest must, in view of the nature of the present volume, be considered secondary. Of first importance to this symposium is the study of Rosenfeld himself.

The nineteenth century in music began with the *Eroica* and ended with the *Sacre du Printemps*. Rosenfeld's mind was formed toward the conclusion of that era. Responding to some currents of nineteenth century thought, he saw the composer and he saw the composer's environment, and he believed that the one was a means for converting the other into symbols in



sound. And so his critical method lay in the reconversion. Probing back, by his informed imagination and intuition, into the sources that gave the music life, explaining its character in terms of its environmental conditioning and judging its success or failure in that light, he pricked the reader's interest and insight into the music. He wrote in *Musical Portraits* (1920):

The music of Moussorgsky comes up out of a dense and livid ground. It comes up out of a ground that lies thickly packed beneath our feet, and that is wider than the widest waste, and deeper than the bottomless abysses of the sea. It comes up from a soil that descends downward through all times and ages, through all the days of humankind, down to the very foundations of the globe itself. For it grows from the flesh of the nameless, unnumbered multitudes of men condemned by life throughout its course to misery. It has its roots where death and defeat have been. It has its roots in all bruised and maimed and frustrate flesh, in all flesh that might have borne a god and perished barren.

This is a method which is admirably suited to a composer like Moussorgsky, whose entire creative life *was* an effort to reflect his environment. But to the question which Rosenfeld put as late as 1937, at the end of his *New Republic* review of Aaron Copland's *Second Hurricane*: "For out of what vortex does music come if not out of a feeling of sociality, a sense of common experience, and a human solidarity?", there is an answer other than the empty echo which is implied. It is that music—profound and important music—can come out of the manipulation of sound-stuffs themselves.

In *An Hour with American Music*, Rosenfeld observes that the nature of a piece of music depends upon the "state" of the composer at the time of composition. The phrase, to be

sure, is not amplified, but in its context it seems to imply that the whole art of music is merely a series of accidents produced by external circumstances which have thrown musically sensitive people into creative "states": that music has its own independent life and validity is only feebly apprehended.

An individual work of art is not necessarily all one thing or the other, so an era may not be entirely under the domination of the one principle or its antithesis.

The end of the nineteenth century was indeed a pathetic era in music. After the *Sacre*, an ethic era was born, and Rosenfeld was present at its *accouchement*. At first he was utterly bewildered by it. He called it "cerebral formalism," "archaïcizing," "diddling with fugues." Later he condemned it as a sign of postwar confusion and weakness, a passing fad, and predicted that it would soon disappear. But in *Modern Tendencies in Music* (1927) he blamed it on a lamentable externalism which is characteristic of the French mind and on Erik Satie as its immediate source. The next year, in *By Way of Art*, Camille Saint-Saëns is the villain of the piece; later yet, when he had begun to make his peace with it (*Discoveries of a Music Critic*, 1936), he traced it to Busoni.

Ultimately, however, he did see that this new orientation in music was a thing of immense importance and one very characteristic of our own time. He can scarcely be criticized for not having seen it sooner, partly because it came, like many manifestations in art, in the form of a pendulum-swing that went far back, at least in some externals, and so seemed to be a dislocation. Later it swung forward again into a less extreme and precious manner.

The Rosenfeld of the *Discoveries* understood this movement quite well, if not completely, and its emphasis upon music as

music brought about a change in critical method which is easily discernible in that book. He is now less concerned with the composer as a symbol of his human origins and more concerned with the composer as a maker of music; he is less interested in external sources and more interested in the internal facts of style.

Later, Rosenfeld concludes that the neoclassic movement might have come into being even if the world had not been precisely what it was—his first and only admittance of the idea that music is not necessarily the automatic product of its temporal environment. But, he wrote:

Our own firm conviction that it is always the period's peculiar feelings of life which select and develop the forms it exploits . . . impels us to hold the victorious neoclassicism, if not a consequence, at least a concomitant of the post-war tenor of life. That period triumphed in a certain technical, mechanical precision: and the transparent, aërial neoclassical and *concertante* style opens the musician's way to a preciseness, a purely structural beauty, like that of machine-cut objects and edifices of steel, concrete and glass. Again, the time had an aversion to subjectivity, to personal lyricism, in T. S. Eliot's words to "an excitement over its own feelings and a passionate enthusiasm over its own passions." . . . Besides, the period had, if not a distinctly anti-nationalistic, at least a liberal-catholic tendency, and talked of "western culture" instead of German *Kultur* and "the Latin genius." In the musical world, one composer who had originally gained fame as the author of a rankly nationalistic score called *Pictures of Pagan Russia*, and another who had written a piece called *Italia*, and a third who had been hailed as the pure Aryan German composer of Brahmsian, Regerish sonatas and quartets, suddenly found themselves standing shoulder to shoulder.

The neoclassic form had probably offered them not only a catholic style in the place of one built on the folk-song and the idiom of their various lands, but, through its reflection of the common antiquities of western musical culture, a mold itself symbolic of catholicity. Even the curious archaicism of its handling of these molds may have been emblematic, an attempt to connect with the spirit of a pre-nationalistic Europe; and emblematic, too, the group's attention to jazz. For jazz is the product and the expression of cosmopolitan populations.

This relationship of a musical movement to objective, readily describable facts of architecture and industrial design, to general intellectual movements within its period, and to highly speculative historic tides, is characteristic. Characteristic, also, is the failure to realize, except in the oblique momentary and tentative admission, that currents of thought having to do with music, and music alone, were also responsible.

One of these currents was simply a reaction from the "pathetic" expression of the prewar years. Another was the birth, among many composers (Hindemith first of all) of a sense of social responsibility and a desire for social usefulness.

The idea, initially set forth by Hindemith both in practice and in theory, and developed at some length by Aaron Copland in his book *Our New Music*, is that modern music had gone too far in its individualistic idioms, that the lag between composer and audience, which began seriously to manifest itself in the later works of Beethoven, had developed in a hundred years' time to a point where the composer and his audience lived in altogether different worlds. The composer was an isolated, unhappy being without real function in his own world. The cure was not to take refuge in a supercilious sense of superiority, nor yet to educate the public up to the composer's level. The

cure lay in bringing music once more in line with the demands and usages of its own society, modifying its idiom—if need be—to what the public can take, but without sacrificing the composer's creative integrity. This point of view has been exaggerated, has led to extremes, and has been neatly answered by a learned musicologist who exclaimed, "I want some *Gebrauchsmusik* for me!" Nevertheless, it has a good deal of sense in it, and it has much to do with what Hindemith, Copland, and numerous others are composing today. That Rosenfeld should have failed to sense this deliberate reaching out toward the environment on the part of today's composers is not so paradoxical as it may seem, for his philosophy viewed the artist as a conditioned rather than a conditioning creature.

Since 1923 and for the rest of his life, Rosenfeld fought the neglect of Horatio Parker, an elderly Yale professor. He had a touching, eternal regard for Parker's opera, *Mona*, and perhaps he had his hand on the edge of a bigger truth in his repeated references to that forgotten work. Could it be that the past of American music is full of important scores that had no more chance than *Mona*, that the earlier history of our music may some day be written in terms of composers who now are as obscure as were Feke and Bingham and Eakins in the days when Rosenfeld could write that the work of Albert Ryder was "the first deep expression of American life in the medium of paint"? There is also the case of Ives.

*Discoveries of a Music Critic* is his best book, so far as music is concerned. He is freer here, and possesses more knowledge and certainty. Here, too, his range is bigger. And without losing focus on the contemporary, he also writes about Beethoven, Mozart, Bach, Monteverdi, and the seventeenth century court masque. (His very last effort, his translation of the essays

of Robert Schumann, lay even in the domain of musicology.)

*Musical Portraits* is probably his next best book, for it is highly consistent in view and beautiful and stimulating in style.

Because Paul Rosenfeld indulged in few technical terms, there is an impression among some musicians that he lacked knowledge of musical technique. This view represents a fantastic misinterpretation of this critic's aims. A thorough acquaintance with his writings will only emphasize the fact that he could have parsed musical work on equal terms with the professional technicians, if he had judged such analysis important for the art.

His errors of technical fact are very few. All have to do with the particular necessities of the orchestra. Obviously, he preferred to rely on piano redactions whenever they were available. Usually they sufficed for his critical purposes.

Thus Paul Rosenfeld will be remembered. He will be remembered as a galvanizer of musical enthusiasms, and as such his work has permanent value. It is he, the seeker and affirmer of the creative spirit, who has made his lasting contribution to our literature.

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## A POET REMEMBERS

THE GRANDEUR of our arts as the Lear of our present civilization, particularly the New York aspect of it, was Paul Rosenfeld's theme. He was definitely its priest, one of its priests here—in that unobtrusive manner which makes the “good priest” a favorite character wherever he is known, whether in Chaucer or Canton (Ohio). Paul never stopped working to raise interest in his great master's court. He never wavered in the quality of his devotion. He never sold out to any interest. What he found he held up to what eyes he could muster, what ears he could summon.

If we have or are to have a culture worth treasuring, such men should be honored. Naturally you've got to make a distinction between masterwork and dedication to mastery. The masters need no matrix in which to create their pieces. But they very well may starve in the process. Mozart did. Rembrandt scraped bottom. Poe.

Paul Rosenfeld had the quietly admiring, the aware, the nervous mind. He was a man who, while not attempting to define what is excellent too closely, did not on the other hand mutilate it to fit his own standardizations. He was not the offensive cleric of criticism or the officious bore of the daily press who has no real feelings toward the sensitive tissues of his subject matter. He wasn't that kind of a critic. He was not

insistent enough. I don't remember that I ever saw him in a fight. I don't think he had any hatreds or strong revulsions. He had the gentleness of manner, almost the shyness of the scientist—only his discoveries, being in another field, did not shake the world as might those of some self-effacing worker in, let us say, organic chemistry. The arts move differently.

No question about it. Paul Rosenfeld was lost, lost in much the same way Henry Adams was lost—but to a different effect—in this world of best sellers and sales lists. Not that he was ineffective. But he found difficulty in putting his delicately balanced talents, one might almost say his frustrations, to practical use for his world, the world which he diligently served. He was too interested in applying his own love to the simple projects which attracted his attention and his energies. A completely ingenuous soul was he, whose greatest virtue seems to have been to refuse to protect himself by cynicism from the pack.

I was reading his *Men Seen* a recent evening. In his chapter on F. Scott Fitzgerald you get what to me is Rosenfeld stripped down to the simplest dimensions of himself, his value as a critic. The essay was written during that novelist's best years. It is astonishing with what generous immediacy Rosenfeld saw the virtues and defects of the man. But what it shows besides is Paul Rosenfeld himself. I quote:

Not a contemporary American senses as thoroughly in every fiber the tempo of privileged post-adolescent America. Of that life, in all its great hardness and equally curious softness, its external clatter, movement and boldness, he is a part; and what he writes reflects the environment not so much in its superficial aspects as in its pitch and beat. He knows how talk sounds, how the dances feel, how the crap-



games look. . . . Not another has gotten flashes from the psyches of the golden young intimate as those which amaze throughout *The Beautiful and Damned*. And not another has fixed as mercilessly the quality of brutishness, of dull indirection and degraded sensibility running through American life of the hour.

I think of Paul Rosenfeld's own sensibility and lack of success before this spectacle presented by Fitzgerald during his triumph. What good for a man to say to himself that there are successes of different sorts? That is, what good is it here for a man to claim his own lesser but nonetheless useful and certainly more amiable desserts? One would think that they, too, would be recognized.

He saw the world much as Fitzgerald saw it. How could he do less? But somewhere along the line (he having the money that Fitzgerald lacked as a young man) the novelist gave his genius the rein, as he gave his life play to run with the pack. But the other man, the critic, to his loss in some ways—who among us really chooses his life?—was caught by moral and intellectual compunctions. He ended as one of our most astute critics, but such a one as does not seek for direct literary awards. He sacrificed his style for the truth of his observations and his career for those loyalties, personal and impersonal, for which he will be remembered and honored.

I remember several parties in his small chambers to which various visiting celebrities had come to meet some of their American confreres. It was never a matching of figures. I don't mean that sort of a party. It was always a few people, no publicity, and, if I judge rightly, they were always a "failure," those parties.

Paul would bumble about, getting in the way, introducing no one properly, failing to have the drinks offered, the perfunctory canapés lying around—looking a little used, perhaps.

There was the party for André Breton, for example. We spoke awkwardly. There was no attempt at anything that might have suggested a train of thought, no “show.” What a perfect picture of New York life at its best. Nothing for the twenty-five cent weeklies. Nothing surely for the fifty-cent ones. Even the tens and fifteens were omitted. It was a simple votive altar on which burned a small fire—in an obscure spot. No blague. Paul’s presence assured that—his chuckle or his fumbling about, torturing his chunky shoulders.

You just liked the man, realized his self-effacing qualities, and became aware of the others in that light, very effectively, upon that background. There is no salon in New York, I could imagine, to cast so unspoiled yet so shrewd a light of understanding over a roomful of people and their careers.

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*Carlos Chavez*

## MEXICAN ACCOLADE

THE GREAT movements in art have always needed a co-ordinated movement in literary criticism or evaluation.

It was necessary for Richard Wagner himself to write volu-

minously on his ideas about art in general and his esthetic point of view in particular. Robert Schumann was another case in point.

Coming to the French—Debussy wrote about music, and succeeded in conveying the spirit of his music in his writings. Jean Cocteau has done a very great deal for the music of Debussy, Ravel, Satie, and the Group of Six.

Any art movement, without this literary expression, is greatly delayed in finding its public.

In the United States, there has seldom been a writer who was genuinely interested in all the arts.

Some twenty or twenty-five years ago, the International Composers' Guild was formed, and afterwards the League of Composers, but both organizations consisted of composers alone. It could well be said that the League of Composers made a brilliant critical contribution with the magazine, *Modern Music*, which was in reality an element of critical exchange among musicians.

Paul Rosenfeld had a multiple sensibility. He, through his plastic sensibilities, explained many musical ideas, and vice versa. He had a varied and wide receptivity. He could really, with deep insight and certainty of artistic perception, understand the new message in music, as in painting and in poetry. He understood it, explained it, and in his inimitable way transformed it into melodic prose. His own literary style took on the expressiveness and character of the subject he treated. He was always perfectly attuned to the vision as well as to the accomplishment of each artist. He could, with his words, make the reader feel the type of music he was writing about.

He was the outstanding brilliant example of a critic—alive, comprehensive, and informed—during the years in which the

United States was becoming acquainted with a new form of feeling and of expression in art.

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*Jean Starr Untermeyer*

## RAPPORT IN TRANSLATION

THE MARRIAGE of true minds is capable of affording deepest affirmation to the ideal elements in the human spirit, ratifying as it does a stubborn human belief in the possibility of harmony and perfection, all too seldom manifested in everyday life. In the realm of human relations, for instance, we rejoice in the affinities between people, either when they are actual and historical or when they are legendary and symbolical; similarly, in the right relation between a great leader and a great cause. In the realm of art we derive unspeakable satisfaction when the artist—writer, painter, or composer—finds his inevitable theme, and less often, since it is so rare, when great writing finds its proper translator.

Paul Rosenfeld has given us this profound satisfaction in his translation of the *Schumann Letters* and in a slighter but no less important contribution, of supplying four missing chapters to Hilaire Belloc's English version of Joseph Bédier's *Tristan et Iseult*.

A retrospective glance over his life brings to view three factors that joined to prepare him for his final literary tasks.

These were his temperament, his training, and his character. His nature—tender, imaginative, and generous—made him open, yes, vulnerable to the various aspects of experience. He could mentally envision people different from himself and ideas alien to his own. But he inclined most strongly to kindred souls, and for that reason he was drawn to explore the Romantic Movement. He steeped himself in its literature and its music, and he could perceive and expound the correspondences between the arts that it fostered. His deep interest in Romanticism and his understanding of it was both intuitive and scholarly. His service to it, in his various writings, reveals not only an innate and involuntary affiliation, but also the ethical position he chose to take. For with all the Romantic's ardor and spontaneity, he lacked or he suppressed in himself another trait of the Romantic's temperament—self-assertion. He effaced himself to an extraordinary degree, and he took up his pen again and again, not so much for direct self-expression as to plead the cause or give voice to the thoughts of others.

It was this scrupulous conscience toward the work of others that became especially valuable when he turned to translation. John Urzidil gives us a quotation from Luther's *Epistle on Interpretation*, in which he writes: "Interpreting [translation] is not the art of every one. It requires a truly pious, faithful, diligent, fearful, Christian, learned, experienced, skilled heart." The emphasis here is on the heart, that emotional-imaginative quality that Paul Rosenfeld had in so marked a degree, and which he used for art—not the art for art's sake, but rather the art for the sake of mankind.

The way he went about his work on the *Schumann Letters* is illuminative. The only other English translation had been published in 1877–80, and when the time came for a new edi-

tion, Paul Rosenfeld was called in as an authority to ascertain the reliability of the first version. He found it far from accurate, even to the extent of saying at times the very opposite of what Schumann had written. He was then prevailed upon (for he was engaged in other work) to undertake a revision that was practically a completely new translation.

To read German and French came to him almost as naturally as to read English. Perhaps he was following Schumann's own advice in his article on Berlioz when he began by making a somewhat free translation to bring out the larger meanings of Schumann's thought. Then gradually he reworked this first draft, getting closer and closer to a literal and yet idiomatic English reproduction of the original text. This is what I call his ethical standpoint, the ideally human way of understanding and interpreting the other. And yet, while this grew out of a desire and determination that was noble, it cannot be gainsaid that loving the object made his performance easier.

That there was real rapport between the nature of Schumann and that of Paul Rosenfeld is obvious. Schumann shows himself in his letters to have *in excelsis* the same qualities that animated his translator—generosity, warmth, taste, insight, enthusiasm, and the high purpose to appreciate and present the work of colleagues, past or present, without prejudice or without giving precedence to his own theories. His aphorisms might easily have been, and possibly were, those of Paul Rosenfeld himself. It is easy to imagine the following mottoes at home on the walls of Paul's dwelling-place:

*The laws of morality are also those of art.*

*It is the artist's lofty mission to shed light into the very depths of the human heart. . . .*

and, with a gesture of renunciation, for he was all too modest:

*Possibly genius alone entirely understands genius.*

Yet he, too, had genius of another kind—the genius of the discoverer, since like Eusebius \* he was quick to acknowledge that “Everything new has spirit in it,” and the genius of piety.

For those who have succeeded in this field know that translation is not merely a linguistic exercise, but that it is an offering of self—what Wilamowitz called a “metempsychosis.” I prefer to call it an adventure in empathy, the first step toward which is that the translator himself be translated.

The fruit of his piety can be enjoyed by those who read the *Schumann Letters* and *Tristan and Iseult*, where, thanks to a miracle of self-abnegation and imaginative skill, his contributions are indistinguishable from those of Hilaire Belloc.

Paul Rosenfeld was no scientist and would never have claimed for himself the provable truth of the Platonian triad. But in him and his work the good and the beautiful found a meeting-place, for in his translation the ethical joins the esthetic.

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\* A character from Robert Schumann’s music criticism.

## THE GENIAL SAGE

THE FIRST time I met Paul Rosenfeld he was writing an article about young composers. This was in the fall of 1937. To hear my music he asked me down to his apartment in Greenwich Village.

It was a sunlit morning when I went there and he opened the door to rooms crammed with books and phonograph records. There was a sense of profusion and loving curiosity that always impressed me in the quarters of college professors. There they seemed accumulations of the old. But here they were the working objects of the present. The paintings of Marin and the photographs by Stieglitz that covered his walls framed a modern life with the new and vigorous tones that Paul wrote about so brilliantly. The whole gave the impression of energetic serenity that we feel in ancient portraits of Chinese sages.

He sat me down to his Steinway piano and listened and talked, and somehow seemed to catch something out of what was to me my hopelessly inadequate presentation of my music. He asked questions—surprising and challenging questions—that I wondered about for days afterwards. I liked him.

That was the beginning of an acquaintance that fed on occasional meetings, where we had opportunity for snatches of critical conversation. I remember particularly one night at the Museum of Modern Art as we recalled the exciting days when



the music of Varèse stirred up storms of anger and enthusiasm. Now all that seemed to have given way to mildly expressive pieces by men more concerned with getting ahead in popularity than with reflecting new and convincing sound worlds.

At almost every one of such meetings we somehow got to talk about Charles Ives. For Paul and I at that time were publishing articles about this American composer. Generally we talked with the attitude of people who would not let their disagreements be final. He argued that the spirit of Ives' music was remarkable, and I that his music did not convincingly express any such spirit. Paul was right. Ives' vision in music was too significant for us to neglect it simply because he lacked a technical equipment in music.

To phrase Ives' significance I suggested a biography of him as a businessman and a composer, against the American background out of which he developed. Paul, I pointed out, was the only writer who had the wide grasp of the situation and who could see into the motivations, into the time itself that had caused the interesting conflicts in Ives' life. Paul felt that he was too busy on his book about literary genres. Then he tried to excuse himself because he did not want to write anything more about music until he had gotten more precise technical knowledge himself. I persisted until, in the end, he consented to do the book if I collaborated to take care of the technical aspect.

So during Paul's last winter, after a decade of acquaintance and merging consonance—over innumerable cups of coffee and tea, during late dark afternoons—we talked and planned. It seemed to us vitally important to think through the age-old problems of the artist's relation to tradition, and the question of distinguishing a living tradition from sterile conventionality.

Also, there was America's relation to European tradition, and the relation of experiment to creative imagination and expression. All this seemed to stand in vital need of redefinition in the light of our contemporary world.

The work of Ives represents a coming to terms with our present-day environment. We—Paul and I—saw Ives as a touchstone to bring all the problems of the artist and his times into pattern. How to describe most clearly the lines of such force made us talk and plan. We talked and planned too much and too long, and now we—sadly—no longer can.

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*Charles E. Ives*

## SPOKESMAN FOR AN AMERICAN TRADITION

PAUL ROSENFELD was a great man in the arts and had that gift of an almost immediate insight into the larger side of music, even if it brought technical processes to which he was unaccustomed—a penetrative discernment into its fundamental and inner meanings, even when heard for the first time. It seems to me that he strongly felt that among music's great powers was that which would help bring more and more to humanity the deeper and higher things in life and in a way the finer sides in the common life of all people.

At the end of one of the chapters of his book *The Discoveries*

of a *Music Critic*, he says, "For artists . . . can help enormously to create a democratic society in America. In investing American essences with worth and presenting them with beauty, they help to convey the national idea as it actually relates these warring and still cognate forces: thus providing a matchlessly practical basis for mutual adjustment."

I deeply—very deeply—appreciate Mr. Rosenfeld's wonderful integrity about music and his fight for an American tradition.

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*Aaron Copland*

## A VERDICT

IT ISN'T often that a composer wants to talk to people about a man who wrote music criticism. Critics and composers are usually considered, by definition, to be incompatible. But Paul Rosenfeld was someone special. Except for the start of his career, he never had a job on a daily newspaper. Most of his writing about music appeared in books and magazines, and was read during his lifetime by a restricted audience. He never wrote in a journalistic style. His prose was richly expressive, sometimes perhaps too richly expressive, with an occasional paragraph in a jargon all his own. But the thing that made him special was not so much what he said or how he said it, but the very attitude he took toward the whole art of music.

To me the exciting thing about Rosenfeld's criticism is the fact that for once a critic completely involved himself in the very music he was criticizing. I'd like to explain that conception of "the involvement of the critic," as I call it. People often talk as if they imagine it is the duty of the critic to remain severely aloof in order to guarantee a balanced judgment. But that is not my idea. A critic, it must be said, is not just a detached bystander whose job may be considered finished when he has given the composer a casual hearing. No, a critic is just as much a member of our musical civilization as any composer is. He ought to be just as deeply involved, just as completely responsible, just as serious when he writes his criticism as a composer is when he writes his music.

Paul Rosenfeld understood all that. Whether he judged a work good or bad, he judged it as a part of himself, not something outside himself—not something that he could take or leave—but something of immense significance to him, and therefore of significance to America, and through America to the world. It is always surprising to find how little our critics seem to want to involve themselves in that sense. They exist on the outer fringe of music—looking on from the outside at what is being done, but seldom taking a really active part in it. If all this is true, then they are a shortsighted lot; for whether they like it or not, we are all in the same musical boat.

Rosenfeld demonstrated his own involvement most clearly in his approach to contemporary music. I very well remember the excitement of reading his first articles about the young Stravinsky and the young Ernest Bloch. That must have been around 1919 or 1920. Later, I first saw mention of the name of Roger Sessions in a Rosenfeld article in the *Dial* magazine. It is easy enough to appreciate who these men are now. But in

those days their music was being vilified in the daily press by writers whose names today are best forgotten.

The American scene in particular was a consuming interest of Rosenfeld's. He believed passionately in the emergence of an important school of contemporary American composers. He was one of the very first to affirm the talents of men like Roy Harris and the Mexican Carlos Chavez. As for myself, I owe him a special debt. He not only went far out on a limb in relation to my music in its earliest stages but also saw to it that I had a patron to help me through those first difficult years. He didn't think the critic's role was done when he had written a good notice on a new composition. He was concerned about what the next work of the composer would be, and the one after that, and how the composer was going to live while writing these next works.

The unknown and unheralded composer remained an absorbing concern of Rosenfeld's through all his writing years. Not every one that he championed has received public recognition. But that was part of the game as he saw it. He wasn't interested in always playing safe with his music judgments. He took chances when some years back he wrote enthusiastically about the neglected Charles Ives or the fifteen-year-old Lukas Foss. He took chances when he gave a pre-eminent place to the music of Leo Ornstein or Edgard Varèse. He took chances when he endorsed the music of the little-known American composer, Charles Mills.

It is not the exactitude of his judgments that is impressive so much as the sharpness of his sensitivity to music. He felt himself at home in an amazing number of different styles and personalities. It was music as a whole that fascinated him rather than any one phase of it. His reactions to the music of masters

like Bach or Palestrina were no less keen and perceptive than his reactions to modern music.

In a sense Paul Rosenfeld was, I suppose, first a music-lover, and second a music critic. If so, I wish there were more such music-lovers among our music critics.

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*Gerald Sykes*

## THE ARCHANGEL'S CORRESPONDENT

IF FOR the moment all men may be divided into those with the character of fathers and those with the character of sons, no one familiar with Paul Rosenfeld will be in doubt where to place him. Alternately as enthusiastic and self-reproachful as a sensitive undergraduate, until his last day he retained a kind of filial status. Women were charmed by him; strangers took to him; he was still boyishly warm and openhearted at the age of fifty-six. This may have contributed to the sense of exceptional bereavement felt by his colleagues on the startling occasion of his death. In addition to sentiments of shock and respect and grief and love, there may also have been an identification of themselves with him. Do not most artists of the rebellious advance-guard give the impression of being Sons? When a new Ulysses is born, is he not instantly claimed by Mars or Mercury, while Apollo must get along with Telemachus? Certainly

this theme has been repeated often enough in the characteristic literary works of our time. Is it not possible that a real artist-patriarch can only be produced in a time of relative harmony between the individual and society, under conditions that obviously do not exist today? Or is this a question of type and character, anterior to conditions?

In any case, it is unmistakably a Son we discuss in Paul Rosenfeld. Let us not however expect any more of our modest metaphor. Its purpose will have been served if it guides us to what I consider the central fact about him, his credo of defenselessness. For this actor played Telemachus with such romantic singleness of mind that he spurned all props that might have come from the classic theater of the patriarchs—systematic training, technical discipline, calculated effect, hard reasoning—and conceived his performance in dash and inspiration alone. In this he resembled many poets who have also made a code of helpless immaturity, willing to cede shrewd manipulative crafts to their blood-enemies the journalists, if only they themselves might be the occasional instruments of the timeless, rather than the regular recorders of the day. It is significant that one of our most distinguished poets, Marianne Moore, placing numerous examples of his verbal skill in evidence, has claimed Paul Rosenfeld as in spirit a practitioner of her own art; and that such other poets as E. E. Cummings and Allen Tate and Wallace Stevens and Hart Crane were among his warm admirers. It must be observed, however, that he did not write in verse, but, since his greatest stimulation seemed to come from art-objects, in critical prose, and thus subjected himself to an entirely different kind of judgment.

No evaluation of his works will be attempted in this brief note. He has been praised generally for his pioneer labors with

the *Seven Arts*, the *Dial*, and the *American Caravan*, as well as for being among the first to encourage many young talents that later proved their worth; but there have been serious reservations about his writing. Often the objection is made that next to a piece of exceptional insight and felicity will stand another that is unbelievably maladroit. I do not deny it. Some readers enjoy him; others fling down his books in annoyance. I myself have had both experiences. Certain critics find his intentions more praiseworthy than his accomplishment, and say that he will be best remembered for his generous enthusiasms in the service of fellow artists of his day, particularly in the field of music, with perhaps a few of his best pages finding their way into our literary record. Others say that in writing of music he should have striven less to produce a prose music of his own, and recognized the limitations of words. Such judgments, though useful, are in danger of forgetting that his mistakes, which had a way of calling attention to themselves, were inevitable in view of his method—or somewhat intentional lack of method—which put so much emphasis upon the reception of impressions and so little upon their effective reprojction. In other words, it is more to the point to try to understand this man who, in the language of radio, had some of the best antennae in the world, as his remarkable conversation made evident (not a few of his literary friends considered him the most cultured American they knew), but was a highly undependable transmitter.

Let us stop trying to place him, therefore, and begin to try to understand him. However useful it may seem to maintaining a librarian orderliness in our minds, placing artists is in a sense a parvenu trick and altogether too prevalent among even the most secure and independent of our intelligentsia. It is true that we live in a land of “placers” who will not stir until each



new intellectual highway has been plainly signposted for them, and esthetic travel is altogether too infrequent among such tourists. They are a despotic lot, moreover, impatient of the intangible, and their vulgarizing influence has been felt by all of us. This may be inescapable, since the training of a modern Shelley is not unlike that of a newspaperman. Still we shall be much happier when we throw away our road maps.

It was natural enough that Paul Rosenfeld, trustful inheritor of a transcendentalist belief in man's infinite capacities, who came of age in the hopeful year 1911 when young Americans looked forward to almost limitless progress in politics and art, should make a credo of defenselessness. He was that kind of young man and he was living in that kind of day. He would be a wax disc on which the wondrous earth would record its secret music. His life-strategy would be to be unstrategic. To him there was nothing remarkable in such a choice of career; it was simply a matter of doing what he liked, since he had an inheritance of five thousand dollars a year. He liked works of art, especially those of his contemporaries; he would live among them, he would encourage them, he would write about them. That would be his life.

A great many other young men have wished for such a life, and regretted lacking the money to make it possible. For their benefit let it be recorded that this one, after considerable early productivity and reputation, did not work out as planned; even given such a headstart on his difficulties, with the means to keep economically abreast of them, Paul Rosenfeld lost his life-race. No one who knew him well could pretend that he won, in any justifiable use of the word. In later days he talked continually of his "failure," and every attempt to remind him of his accomplishments was sorrowfully rejected. (Meanwhile

his income had shrunk considerably; the carefree *rentier* was prey to economic anxiety.) Much neighborly association with him at that period convinces me that this state of mind contributed to the physical condition to which he finally yielded.

He had failed, however, in his own eyes and by self-comparison with the best. With typical romanticism, innocent of the shrewdness that most artists summon to avoid facing really high standards, he had permitted himself no other scale of self-measurement, and when he grew older and his intellectual perceptions deepened and turned in upon himself, the youthful reliance upon his rich senses and intrepid intuitions being at last challenged by the sober self-criticism of middle age, he reached the literally mortifying conclusion that he had fallen short of his masters. In such a condition he brushed aside any reminders of his actual accomplishments. Nor would he consider capitalizing his position as chief prophet of the new American music which a lucky constellation of radio, films, ballet, theater, and patriotism had presented with an exploitable windfall. It was also useless to recall to him the environmental odds against him—a dwindling audience for impressionist criticism, as well as a general lack of art-seriousness and a growing politicalization of thought and emotion—since according to his nineteenth century code of self-reliance he should have been more than equal to any and all antagonists. It was evident at this period that he believed that “if only he had been a better artist,” he would have triumphantly mastered all difficulties; the theme, in one form or another, was never long absent from his talk. A psychiatrist might have found that he died of a sense of guilt, not a heart attack—and because he believed he had not been worthy of the mighty critical standards of Sainte-Beuve and Schumann!

It is unnecessary to point out that if other writers were to set themselves such standards, our obituary pages would be full and our best magazines empty. But of course there is no danger of that.

Under such a perfectionist handicap, disaster could only have been averted by the sternest kind of realignment of the man to himself and his environment, a realignment that rarely takes place, that the Son finds almost impossible. When under the grimmest battering he bloodily achieves it, he is certain to be in primary relation to Nature; if he is a critic, dependent for stimulation upon the work of others, he cannot do it—or, if he does, he becomes in effect a kind of philosopher, dealing directly with life rather than with life through art-objects. Exceptionally thin-skinned and tender-minded, Paul Rosenfeld was by no means the kind of Son to endure such solitary arctic trials. The inclination of the wishful, ardent “boy in the sun” ran, on the contrary, toward fantasies of cultural brotherhood, such as those expressed hopefully in *Port of New York* and certain of his early writings on American music—longings that he abandoned later in bitter disillusionment when the sharpened demands of his maturing intellect dissatisfied him with some of his erstwhile heroes. It was also during this middle-aged period that he complained repeatedly: “What was I doing at college?” or “I don’t know the ABC’s of philosophy!” or “Would you believe it, I’m just now learning what Plato was all about!” (Under a mental strain that might have led to a complete breakdown, he had embarked courageously upon an ambitious study of literary forms which involved a strenuous re-education in historical thought. The once self-indulgent impressionist, at an age when most writers are content to repeat themselves, was striving to master a new and uncongenial intel-

lectual technique, to write less rhapsodically, to correct the errors of his youth.) His self-criticisms of this period were directed, I believe, not only at his training but at his temperament, at the very depths of his character. They were uttered with a despair that I did not appreciate at the time, although I recall my horror when he said, apropos of something else, but in a similar tone, that he had stopped playing the piano, which had formerly been his indispensable companion. In my preoccupation with my own difficulties and in my conventional efforts to cheer him I did not permit myself to realize fully that I was witness to a tragedy.

This is a painful account to give of so springlike a nature. To confine myself thus to the last act of his drama is like forgetting the rosefield and thinking only of the autumn frost for which it is always unprepared. This man loved beauty with rare devotion. One of the most gifted correspondents ever accredited to our cultural front, he has left behind an authentic record of our worst-reported battles, and his very errors, as typical of his school, will interest the historian. His clearer-headed successors in the advance-guard will do well to beware excessive self-congratulation on what they think is the incontestable superiority of their more scientific methods. Such criticism has also its booby traps. Only with extraordinary imagination and character can one escape the snares of the New Academy. Few real literary personalities emerge from it, and it seems to rely too often on mere application of scientific methods, as if the subjective issue could be dodged. At least the claim can be made for Paul Rosenfeld that he was, on occasion, as Miss Moore says, a poet.

"Whom do I write for?" he once asked. "For the Archangel Gabriel!"

No remark he ever made to me was more characteristic. He believed quite simply that he had observed such wonders on the earth, especially in the handiwork of his companions, that his account of them must be addressed directly—airmail, special delivery—to the highest echelons in Heaven.

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*Henry Hazlitt*

## PRIDE IN COPY

PAUL ROSENFELD reviewed art regularly for a period when I was the literary editor of the *Nation*. At that time the literary editor's department included not only book reviews, but reviews of art, music, and architecture, as well as films and the drama. Joseph Wood Krutch as drama critic was autonomous. The book editor's responsibility for his column was purely one of make-up and proofreading; but the contributors on the other subjects mentioned dealt directly with me.

I have forgotten now whether the initiative came from me or from Paul Rosenfeld when we originally agreed that he should make regular contributions to the *Nation* on art. I remember only that I had a high admiration for his intense and passionate eagerness to seize the salient qualities of an artist's work, and the precision and vividness with which he could succeed in conveying them. I knew no one who matched him in these qualities.

He was also an extremely meticulous writer who was never satisfied with his copy. My impression is (though in this I may be mistaken) that his copy came in typewritten but with many changes and interlineations by hand. What I am certain of is that proofs would come back from him with so many deletions, additions, substitutions, and other changes that the type had to be virtually reset. In the feverish last moments before the weekly deadline for the book pages, I came to dread the return of a Paul Rosenfeld proof.

Sometimes these articles would have to be cut to make a typographical fit. My practice was never to cut Paul's article if I could possibly take the lineage out of somebody else's. This was partly because I had to go through his piece several times to make sure that the last-minute cut I made would be one that he would not too strongly object to. But the consequences were always the same. He would call me up and say, "Why did you cut my piece?" I would then carefully explain to him that it fell an inch or two below the bottom of the page and that it had to be cut so that the drama piece (or whatever it happened to be) could start at the top of the next page. No matter how long or careful or documented my explanation, Paul would always come back with the same reply: "But the *New Republic* never cuts my pieces!" This went on as a regular thing during the whole period of his contribution. I never did discover the typographical secrets of the *New Republic*.

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## CONCERN FOR THE FORMATIVE COMPOSER

MUCH of the generous good fortune the younger musicians of America gratefully had in Paul Rosenfeld's active appreciation of their music was due to the very brilliant extravagance and vitality of his own personal gifts. He was not merely a critic of the very highest order—perhaps, indeed, the most important of our time—but he was in addition what I'd like to call a professional music-lover. Incessantly involved as he was with the new productions of young artists whom he found exciting, he simply could not be abstract and remote. It was characteristic of him to enter their music workshops, so to speak, and learn firsthand of problems that concerned their craft.

I have never known another nonprofessional musician who could speak with such very good judgment and sound instinct on points of modern composition. It was not an extramusical approach—something literary or studied—Paul brought in his enthusiasm for our music, but rather a genuine concern for the materials with which we worked, and for which we had the most reverence as sound symbols of our expressive intentions. This is not to say that he was picky and pecky about the mechanics of technique. His larger aim was to know our esthetic purposes in the broadest sense, and his final focus of attention was on the musical qualities of our compositions in actual performance.

But he was aware that a more inward comprehension of musical scores can only be realized by an intelligent grasp of the sound apparatus involved, and by a clear understanding of the particular musical language employed by a composer. All music is of course heard by the sum total of a man's cultural and spiritual experience, but Paul's listening was enriched and tempered by a very special sensitivity, born of a real and intimate study of the young contemporary composers' works with which he found himself enraptured. To Rosenfeld, music criticism was a kind of perpetual springtime of falling in love with some new composition, a sort of constant ardor for personal union with the best in new music.

Many young talents discovered to their regret, however, that he was shrewdly able to resist any beguiling temptress of sound who might expose her true nature by some trickery of musical effects or by bombastic pretentiousness in style or manner. Paul reserved his admiration for those works which seemed to him to be wrought with the greatest integrity. A brilliant wit himself, he was always highly pleased with expressions of genuine humor in modern pieces, but he had scant regard for comic effects and slapstick devices, and could not abide melodic banalities, rhythmic vulgarities, or cheap harmonic progressions.

I can perhaps best picture some of the generosities that Paul exhibited toward the younger musicians by the recollection of some of my own very happy and privileged moments with him. Rosenfeld's interest in my work was first quickened by his hearing my *First Sonata for Violin and Piano*. He expressed a desire to discuss this work and to hear more of my music.

Those of us who were fortunate enough to become close friends of Paul's will never forget his warm and friendly apart-



ment on West Eleventh Street. I've never known a place more compactly alive with intellectual color and exciting cheerfulness. Almost every wall was packed with good books, old ones, new ones, and all of them very well thumbed. The flat top of the grand piano was always charmingly different in an ever-changing disarray of letters, booklets, scores, magazines, pipes, matches, cigarettes, and flowers. Undoubtedly we all had an affection for this home. I'm not alone among my colleagues who returned again and again to Paul's quiet little teas or dinners, and who found there perhaps the largest and deepest sympathy that we may ever find in all our musical journeys here.

A very tangible example of the sincerity of his interest in new music was his reaction to one of my concerts at Detroit, where a one-man show of my chamber music was arranged. At that time Paul was engaged in writing a piece for the *Modern Music* quarterly on the works of Robert Palmer and myself. Learning that I was unable to go to my Detroit concert, he unhesitatingly proceeded to go himself—both to compensate for my necessary absence, and to hear four works of mine, new to him. He felt that this would stimulate the progress of his article and bring it up to date.

But those who knew Paul will find little in this incident to remark as unusual. It was completely characteristic.

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## FELLOWSHIP AT IRVING PLACE

IF "CRITICISM" has to be merely the response, the purely subjective response of an individual to artistic impressions, with no regard for history, technique of an art, and more "objective" points of view, then, undoubtedly Paul Rosenfeld was a great critic—as his reviews always were full of life, of imagination, of interest.

At the beginning of our relationship (about 1916–1920) he responded magnificently to my conceptions and realizations, even without knowing or understanding their purely musical significance. He was taken by his imagination, and transmuted his sensorial impressions into a vivid and passionate language. And I shall always be grateful for what he did, in such a way, in stimulating other people's imagination and preparing them to receive my message.

Later, his ideas on "modernism" led him astray, in my sense. This false idea of modernism, in music as well as in other arts and realms of life, has misled so many people, especially here in the United States.

But it has never changed my feelings for Paul and I persistently cherish the fine memories of the past, his warmth, his kindness, his generosity, his encouragements.

The little apartment at Irving Place will always remain a shrine in my heart.

## INTERLUDE IN THE ADIRONDACKS

PAUL ROSENFELD was fortunately endowed with cultural experience and equipped with a rare faculty for translating esthetic reactions into words which make art criticism significant. His writing about painting was immensely enriched by the latitude of his intellectual and esthetic interests, though pre-eminently his preoccupation was with music. Music is the most abstract of all the arts, nonobjective painting notwithstanding. The enjoyment of music has always seemed to me a direct esthetic experience in which the connotations provide a far greater wealth of reactions than the denotations.

Paul approached painting as I believe he approached music. That seemed true at least in so far as my own paintings were concerned. The kinetic weights of form, the dynamism of color, and the significance of line—these to me are the keyboard of the painter. Of course, both the subjective and objective experiences which these tools are used to express have a qualitative aspect which Paul was always quick to detect.

He was not much concerned with the actual subject of a painting. But he was keenly interested in discovering the inner aspirations or interpretive symbolism of a canvas. Expressing his reaction to one of my nudes, he wrote, "This one has the more aerial, floating tone of mountains in blue October, and mingles with the sensations of flesh the cool mysteriousness of

sharp aromatic air, golden crests and profound and lonely lakes."

Perhaps Paul felt more intensely these particular subconscious overtones in my work because he personally knew and loved the Adirondacks where I lived and worked. If you met Paul on a mountain trail in hiking clothes with a rucksack on his back, he somehow always remained very much of a metropolitan. He almost personified the city man communing with nature while on a brief vacation. He never seemed to me at home in the woods even though he cared so much about them. He could feel "the quality of living stripped to essentials: the acrid breath of the rough and solid earth beneath" in paintings. But he was too much of an esthete to be genuinely earthy himself. He had the power to wield rugged and double-edged words but not a woodsman's axe. He appreciated the homely simplicity of "the many little divinations of the guardian, humble, friendly spirits of animate and inanimate objects," and at the same time the "tough forces of life in an earthy world."

He had a healthy intellectual freedom from inhibitions, yet in his personal life, to the extent that I knew it, he seemed oversensitized and withdrawn. "Certain of these juxtaposed forms," he wrote, "convey a flush of the human intimacy so ludicrously rare in our civilization; a reflection of the quiet approach and touch and concord of things deeply related and freely moving."

Paul saw beneath the surface and, because he was himself creative, he intuitively interpreted the origin of certain peculiarities of plastic expression. "Those thick flakes of paint and high, triumphant color harmonies of Weston's communicate a living experience somehow declarative of a peculiar American, Yankee, Quaker and 'ethical' angle of vision and base of ex-

ploration; implying by virtue of their appearance a collective origin."

I vividly recall the first time he came to my Adirondacks studio. This visit—repeated many summers—initiated a real friendship, though circumstances prevented our seeing each other often. Not long after that visit Paul wrote me he had decided to do an article about my work.

On such occasions his hypertension to each painting as it was shown kept him perched nervously on the edge of his chair. He was restless and gave the impression that at any moment he might reach a surfeit and rush from the room. He was like a string drawn taut. From time to time his reactions spilled over in short, ejaculated phrases. Even his silences were vibrant. You could feel intricacies of thought weaving through his mind. Again and again he would dart forward to peer closely at the canvas. It seemed to help him absorb more directly the qualities of the painting.

Once, by way of explaining this action, he turned to me after examining a painting of tumbled stone cliffs near a mountain top. "I was wondering," he said, "why that had any special significance, and then it occurred to me that the actual shape-forms used, at least those on which you have put emphasis, in their interrelationship convey a sense of the eternal."

My paint quality, "shaggy and bare of slickness," was to him a valid means of expression and no matter what the subject. Georgia O'Keeffe, in contrast, shuddering a little before one of my nudes, said to me, "If you ran your hands over her, they would get splinters and bits of broken glass."

It was not in his nature, however, to speak and much less to write glibly, casually, or superficially. Each of his articles about painters was a creative achievement in its own right,

quite independent of the work that happened to inspire his thoughts. The gamut of ideas that he could condense into a single paragraph was often far richer than most art critics achieve in a full-length article. Occasionally his style of writing seemed over-replete with sudden transitions of thought for hasty reading.

Paul painted so vividly with words, it seems appropriate to attempt to reveal his qualities as a man and a critic in so far as possible by his own words. "The spiritual implications of these paintings are important in a bourgeois America, dangerously removed from the simple realities and the struggle with nature by a thousand conventionalities and sentimentalities. Weston is by no means the only artist or worker directly in contact with basic things and open to their solicitations and influences. He is far from being the richest in emotional experience and ability. Still, to view a show of his work is immediately to feel the expansion of the American personality, the new adventure of the older American stock."

These quotations and comments may play their minor part. But, in my opinion, there is no one to replace him in American art criticism.

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HUMANISTIC CRITIC \*

*Men Seen*, Paul Rosenfeld's second collection of critical essays, is presented frankly as a miscellany. The various essays have not, as in *Port of New York*, been remolded to give a formal shape to the book, nor have the subjects been chosen as illustrative of a single tendency in American life. On the contrary, these are figures from eight literatures: the twenty-four novelists, critics, and poets included in the title are so divergent in aim, so disparate in quality, that their presence in a single volume would seem to signify nothing unless Mr. Rosenfeld's sensitiveness to the most varied impressions, the generosity of his mind, his passionate interest in every manifestation of the creative spirit of his time. There is no effort to diminish the differences between these writers; rather his aim has been to reproduce, in pigments of his own, the very color of each and his prevailing mood. And they are judged in the end, not by a literary standard, nor even it would seem always by their literary accomplishment, but by the extent to which they suggest the possibility of a "life completely used, exercised to the fullness of its capacity for tragedy and for delight, and deprived by death of nothing of worth."

This desire to discover among contemporary writers some

\* [This evaluation, published in the *Dial*, August 1925, might well have been written today. Mr. Bishop died in 1944.—Editors' note.]

stay for the mind "stale and weary in its youth, dissonant, jumbled and out of tune with the eternities as with itself," this preoccupation with an ideal of "lustiest living," not only determines the process of judgment: it has also, though perhaps unconsciously, influenced the critic in the selection of his material; and in the end it is seen to have been strong enough to give to a volume frankly put forward as a miscellany, and pretending to no other unity than that of method, something very like a unity of purpose. In any case, though these are literary studies, Mr. Rosenfeld's concern is not entirely with literature. If it were, he could hardly have found a place for Jean Toomer, who as yet remains "a writer experimenting with a style"—a style, I gather, not his own. Nor would he have devoted an essay to Edna Bryner, celebrating merely her fine love of the American forests and her sane attitude on the Woman Question. And yet it may be that Mr. Rosenfeld did well to include both among his *Men Seen*. For the book as a whole represents a continuous search for the poet—not for poetry but the poet—who will "beat the rhythm of his age" and bring to it a new "impulse toward freedom"; who will, like the youth of Isaiah's prophecy, show himself an ensign of the people, and "give the race the direction in which it has to go." And each of the chapters represents a pause in the adventure, and a looking around for anyone who might, even momentarily, be mistaken for this poet—or else (with a bludgeon) for such critical scribes as possibly stand in the way of his coming. It is significant that the book opens with a portrait of D'Annunzio.

For aside from the fact that already he dates somewhat, Gabriele D'Annunzio resembles the poet of the critic's search exactly as—if I may borrow an image—a reproduction in plaster resembles its original in marble. That is to say, in



everything but authenticity. The episode at Fiume is seen to be of the same stuff as the novels and the poems, theatrical but dispiriting, grandiose and at the same time insignificant. D'Annunzio has moved, as Mr. Rosenfeld would have his poet do, in the world of affairs without ceasing to be a poet; but with him, self-assertion has never quite become self-fulfillment. His bravery of exterior is only an antiquated piece of body armor from Florentine workshops; its burnished surface is intricate with mythologies, the bronze sonorous when struck; but the uncomfortable fact remains that it is, now, empty of life and useless except to curators. D'Annunzio is simply the man who has never felt. And over his head Mr. Rosenfeld sends his cry for the true poet, who will come bringing life abundantly.

But if it is to be doubted that Mr. Rosenfeld's concern is entirely with literature, he is nevertheless an excellent literary critic. By seeing literature constantly against a background of life, he obtains in regard to literature itself a completeness of vision hardly to be found in the critic intent only upon formal excellence in writing. There are certain valuations in art which cannot be made by any reference to technical processes, and to prate too long of "significant form" is usually to end in nonsense. For, as Mr. Eliot, a critic whose essential interest in literature cannot be questioned, has remarked in comparing the characters of Shakespeare with those of Jonson, the difference between Boabdil, say, and Falstaff is not to be explained by a pretty theory of humors, but rather by Shakespeare's "susceptibility to a greater range of emotion, and emotion deeper and more obscure." Mr. Rosenfeld is perhaps less interested in range of emotion than in depth and obscurity. Too intelligent not to be aware of the necessity for structure, too sensitive to ignore any felicity of line, he is ultimately concerned only with

one thing; and no "mystery of construction" can ever long divert him from what is always the object of his search—emotion at the core. The advantage of his method appears at once in his essay on Wallace Stevens, a poet whom an esthetic critic could hardly have placed so boldly and so accurately. Possibly it is not very important that a poet should be "placed"; it may be more to the point to send us to his work with some assurance that there is a particular enjoyment to be derived from it. But this also Mr. Rosenfeld has done.

No doubt something of the particular quality of a work of art disappears under analysis, and it is just this quality which impressionistic criticism is apt to impart. In so far as his labor is one of definition, it is, whenever the subject is worth his pains, admirably performed. And in any case the style is adroitly adapted to the impression he intends to convey. At all times exuberant and warm, it is perhaps too stiff-jointed to be properly called flexible; and yet it passes easily from one manner to another, as in the opening paragraph of the essay on Wallace Stevens:

Lord, what instruments has he here? Small muffled drums? Plucked wires? The falsetto of an ecstatic eunuch? Upon deliberate examination it appears Stevens' matter is the perfectly grammatical arrangement of an English vocabulary not too abstract.

Within its own limits it has almost as great a range as all the writers of the Old Testament put together: it can be rhapsodical and epigrammatic at will; can stop for a grotesque turn or a jolly bit of clowning, and proceed at once to a serious, even a profoundly sad, observation. There is an endless verbal invention, and an originality which does not always appear effortless; a tendency—which may also be observed in the pop-

ular coinages in this country—to intensify an expression beyond all need, with a gain in vigor and a more considerable loss of accuracy. And it is at times unnecessarily awkward, a fault due, if I am not mistaken, to Mr. Rosenfeld's having a greater sense for the "feel" of words than for their movement. But movement is there, and amazing vitality. The critic hurries on, wrapped in his style as in a cumbersome overcoat, a little ponderously, but certain always just where he is going. And always he arrives, scant of breath it may be, but nevertheless at the exact point for which he started. And in the meanwhile he has passed completely around a subject and seen him, apart from himself, an individual having his own existence.

If he does not come off so well with Joyce and Proust as with, say, D. H. Lawrence, it is less that his sensibilities have failed before works of such magnitude as theirs, as that neither *Ulysses* nor *A la Recherche du Temps Perdu* can be understood simply as an emotional experience. Some account must be taken of their structure and of the extent to which the emotions they present are modified by that structure. Both Joyce and Proust, differing widely as they do in other respects, are highly conscious artists deliberately manipulating their material to impersonal ends. And in treating Proust as though he were merely a neurasthenic writing at all hours of the night to still some inner conflict—a description which I suspect would apply rather better to Robert Louis Stevenson than to the creator of Swann—Mr. Rosenfeld has arrived at what seems to me the only serious misinterpretation in the entire volume. "The *Recherche du Temps Perdu* seems therefore to have been an attempt to give the present and the future the fair chance which the backward-flowing libido would deny to it." If Mr. Rosenfeld will reread *A l'Ombre des Jeunes Filles en Fleur* and read,

as he does not yet appear to have done, *La Prisonnière*, I think he will see that it is more profitable to regard Proust as one who as a boy had immersed himself in Plato and was his life long occupied with the relation of the actual world to the real world of memory and desire, than to regard him as a neurotic unable to free himself of a boyish attachment to his mother. In *Ulysses* he has indeed pierced at once to the emotional center of gravity of the book: the relation between Dedalus and Bloom. He has seen that their relation is essentially a metaphysical one, but in minding only the direct lines between them, to the neglect of those parallels which Joyce has placed throughout *Ulysses* to establish Bloom's position in regard to Stephen and his own dead son—such, for instance, as the discussion in the library of Shakespeare's relation to Hamnet Shakespeare and to Hamlet—he has failed to give a completely satisfactory account of it. The analysis stops too soon. He has arrived at what appear the most plausible reasons yet found for Joyce's having made Bloom a Jew; but as he passes them by without comment, I am not quite sure that he himself is aware of his discovery.

It is to Van Wyck Brooks that Mr. Rosenfeld is indebted for his conception of the poet as redeemer of the people, as well as for one or two other ideas which have seriously influenced his criticism—a debt which he has in a previous volume generously acknowledged. Of the two, it is Mr. Rosenfeld's poet who is the more gracious and humane, as he is the more credible. But both, I am inclined to think, enlarge upon the power of even the great poet to influence living, as they certainly overestimate what the poet can accomplish alone. Before there can be a Dante there must be a Saint Thomas Aquinas to precede him. Joyce has resumed the age as we know it; and for other knowledge and a different apprehension of the universe, we

shall have to wait upon the scientists. But of one thing at least we may be certain; if the poet does arrive in our time, either in America or elsewhere, Mr. Rosenfeld will be among the first to recognize him and praise him. As for Mr. Brooks, we cannot be so sure. It seems highly probable that he will be too tightly shut in his library, tracking down the literary failures of the last half-century, to be faintly aware of his existence.

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*Part Four*

LETTERS FROM  
SHERWOOD ANDERSON

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*Stark Young*

## A MARGINAL NOTE

SHERWOOD ANDERSON was a combination, impossible to convey in words to anyone who never saw him, of the straightforward and contrived, of simple and disarming sincerity and elaborate, canny pose. As well as I knew him—and for a time in the early twenties, I saw him almost every day—I was never sure when he was leaving off one and passing into the other; I am not sure that he always knew himself when he was himself and when he was posing. I am speaking of something inner, far within, not merely of telling the truth or not telling it. On that score he was without any morals at all, consciously indifferent as to whether what he said was true or false. When *A Story Teller's Story* came out, I told him how much I admired it; he said he was glad to hear that, and added, I remember, "Of course, it's full of lies."

I mentioned how little General Sherman is said to have been concerned when various misstatements of fact were pointed out in his autobiography; he merely said well, the memoirs were his, weren't they? Sherwood came by lying naturally and honestly. His father, he said, told so many lies that his own children never knew, for example, even what state he had been born in—he would ask every stranger who came by what state he came from, and whatever state the stranger might say, he shook hands on it, "Why man, that's my home state, too!" By



all this I was leading up to an expression of my appreciation of Sherwood's mentioning me as he did in his book and especially so often in this last one, me and Paul Rosenfeld. We can let that pass, and I will go on to say that of all Sherwood's friends, the one he talked of most—and he talked a great deal about everybody and everything—was Paul. He considered that of all writers and all his friends Paul had the culture and the style he most admired and felt the lack of in himself.

As I have already said, you never quite knew how much Sherwood meant of what he said, or if he meant it at one time whether he would hold to it at another, but what he said about Paul Rosenfeld was so often said and in so many different ways that you were compelled to believe he meant it. It was not entirely something modest on his part, not any particular underestimation of his own writing. For this was about the time when literary agents were beginning to get far different prices for his stories from the ten dollars he had once been, as he said, damned glad to get—glad to get the story published at all, to tell the truth. He could not always put up a cogent critical defense of his work or develop a protective theory of art or make a trained analysis, but he believed well enough both within himself and from the things said about his writing, that he was good. When he was going strong, he thought he was very good indeed.

We had some tremendous conversations about this business, and I said that he was talking nonsense about this style and polish superiority, that what was one man's meat was another man's poison, and that, leaving me out of the argument, Paul would be the first one to say so. He would know that Sherwood's style was more than adequate to his purposes; would know how disarming, naked, and right so much of *Winesburg, Ohio* was,

what remarkable power came off from many of those seemingly simple passages, and that nobody else would or could have written them, or got them up in the first place. One could see that Sherwood believed that too, took what I said as true enough, and yet he went right on speaking of Paul's wide culture and style as something he himself could never hope to achieve, showing at the same moment both that he was never going to try for it and that he was going on feeling this admiration, envy, and delight. As a marginal note on Paul Rosenfeld this complicated, warm feeling of Sherwood's is full of matter. It serves to indicate both the respect, amounting almost to awe, that he felt for what seemed to him education, cultivation, finish, and also the fact that, in addition to the many other qualities in Paul that he admired and loved, it was in Paul—above everybody else—that he found this quality of culture and style represented.

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## THE LETTERS

Palos Park

January 23, 1921

Dear Paul—

You know how happy your wire made me.\* Of all the men I know in America, it is you I should have picked to go with to Europe. This year it has been very hard for me to live in the Middle-West. I can come back here to live but I have been deeply hungry to go into old cities, see old cultural things. You have opened the door for me.

\* [This letter followed an invitation for a trip to Europe as Mr. Rosenfeld's guest.—Editors' note.]

Your wire, of course, does not say where you want to go in Europe. I suppose of course you'll want to go to Paris.

With my passage paid, I'll be able to manage—the exchange rates are favorable. I will not need to live expensively there. Surely in Paris, for example, C[illegible word] can show me how to live at not too great cost. Perhaps you also know the trick of it.

I'll not come to New York now—first to save money for the trip with you—second to stay here and work.

I've finished a new 25,000 word story. Would you care to read it? I would like your mind on it.

Will you want to be bothered with the paintings? I had planned to express them to you this week.

O, Paul, I can't tell you what this chance and the opportunity it offers for companionship with you means to me.

Sherwood

Palos Park

Wednesday Evening, February 17, 1921

Really dear Paul—

I wish I had some way of telling you how glad I am that some man is writing constructive stuff. All day I have been thinking of you and tonight I chanced to pick up *Freeman* and saw your thing on "The World's Illusion." It was like a clear stream of wind in a murky town. What things you have done this year. What have you not gained in clear statement, beauty of style, strength of vision.

I've been blue-funky. X—— has evidently gone temporarily quite insane. In Y—— there is—it's hard to say it, I admire the man so much—a kind of hopeless stupidity.

Surely you know Paul that there is music in life. I have come to count on you.

I feel that I can't live at all if there is not one honest, clear mind that responds to music in painting, writing, anything.

I spent a day with Sandburg. He is really a beautiful thing—but there are limitations, sharp, terrible, unsurmountable.

Why should I not pour out before you a little of what I feel. I am so often humble before your sanity, the clear beauty of things you say and do. It isn't just the thing in *Freeman*—it's the tendency of your mind nowadays, your gripping and regripping the real things.

I'm so damned glad of you, Paul.

Sherwood

Chicago

Thursday, May 10, 1921

Dear Paul—

I will be sending you along the passport with my income tax receipt and all the other signatures, pictures, scrolls, etc., needed to get out of the country, by registered mail, today or tomorrow.

The new book I have decided to call *The Triumph of the Egg*. It will contain about eight or ten short stories, the long story "Out of Nowhere into Nothing" and another long story I haven't yet given a title to.

I think you are mistaken about the title to the story "Out of Nowhere," etc., but about the other points you make against it, I don't know. I shall read it over again and think about it when I am in better shape.

It has, in many ways, been a rotten winter for me but at last I seem on the trail of what has been the matter with me. I have had no real pep for months and every day's work tired me out so I have gone about most of the winter as glum as hell. Now the doctors tell me my system has been filled with poison for all these months because of infected antrums. They seem right as the few treatments I have taken are making me feel more a man.

I wonder about your strictures regarding form. Is it inevitable that the matter of form become uppermost in the critic's mind? Must he always have that ground to stand on? Your article on Cyril Scott set me thinking. To be sure, I had no quarrel with much you said about him, but it did seem to me I objected a little to the ground on which you stood when you fired some of your shots at him.

Hackett always attacks me by saying my sense of form is atrocious and it may be true. However, he also commends me for getting a certain large loose sense of life. I often wonder, if I wrapped my packages up more neatly, if the same large loose sense of life could be attained.

This has been an amusing year. Neither *Poor White* or *Winesburg* were selling much until W. L. George and later Sinclair Lewis began talking about me. Now they do sell, not hugely but surprisingly well for me. In other words, I find people taking these two fellows' word on me as an artist. The gods must be amused. Lists of names float through the papers. I am at various times grouped with Fitzgerald of *This Side of Paradise*, Webster, William Allen White, Dell, Lewis, E. P. Roe, and others.

In the matter of form, Paul, I have much to say to you that we shall have an opportunity to say this summer. One thing

I would like you to know is this—as far as I am concerned, I can accept no standard I have ever seen as to form. What I most want to be and remain always is an experimenter, an adventurer. If America could have the foolish thing sometimes spoken of as—Artistic Maturity—through me, then America could go to the devil.

I am not so foolish as to think of this statement as in any way a challenge to you and your point of view—it is rather an assurance to you that the praise I may have had this year does for the most part seem utterly foolish to me.

I am sorry about X—— and his attitude. While I am not sure I can in any way change that attitude, I do want to talk of the whole matter with him and am looking forward to the opportunity to do so. What I fancy will happen is this—that he may in the end come to see the justice of all you said about his work but will never quite forgive you for having said it.

The prospect of this summer with the three of us together stirs me deeply every time I think of it. Tennessee is a much stronger person physically than she has been since I have known her and will be a great companion. I am glad you are going to know from longer association a certain thing about her that makes her often almost too decent to be a woman at all.

I have said little. I have much to say. Anyway, please do not feel guilty if you let fifty of my letters go unanswered.

With Love,  
Sherwood

Dear Paul—

Your “American Painting” is a beautiful piece of work. I do not believe anything being done in the country in poetry

or prose is more important or creative than this kind of writing.

And I was particularly glad you could say what you have of Dove—the man I look to to do the biggest work we have had. I believe I know what your saying what you have will mean to him.

Surely if there is some promise of rebirth here it will mean nothing to have the romanticist merely routed by the realists.

The flesh must come into its own.

That, you see, is just where Sandburg and his type of man doesn't make himself count as he should.

Thank the Gods—I'll be seeing and talking with you soon.

Sherwood

Palos Park

Saturday

Dear Paul—

It was good to hear from you. I have been in the country almost continuously since I got home and whenever I have gone to town or whenever Tennessee has come out here, the greeting has been the same. "Have you heard from Paul?" It threatened to become one of those annoying family sayings that no one else understands but that always makes the members of the family smile.

I'm glad you reminded me of *Windy*. I'll send it Monday from town. Also I'll have what there is of the "Testament" copied and send it at once. There should be more than the one copy anyway.

You understand, of course Paul, that the "Testament" is a purely experimental thing with me. Many of the things you will

now find in it will no doubt eventually be cast out altogether. However, I'm going to send it to you just as it is. In this book I am trying to get at something that I think was very beautifully done in some parts of the Old Testament by the Hebrew poets. That is to say—I want to achieve in it rhythm of words with rhythm of thought. Do I make myself clear? The thing, if achieved, will be felt rather than seen or heard perhaps. You see, as the things are, many of them violate my own conception of what I am after. In making this book, I have felt no call to responsibility to anything but my own inner sense of what is beautiful in the arrangement of words and ideas. It is, in a way, my own Bible. I think, in a way, you and Brooks and Waldo have always a little misunderstood something in me. Have you ever known well an old priest of the Catholic faith? He will make almost ribald remarks about mother church sometimes, but if you take that to mean he hasn't real love and devotion to her, you make a great mistake.

You see, after all, I was raised in a different atmosphere than most of you fellows. Among workers, farmers, etc., here in the Middle West, it used to be thought almost unwholesome to be outwardly serious about anything. After all you see I am a product of the same thing Brooks talks so much about in his *Mark Twain*.

There was, you see, an outward technique. If a man say anything seriously to another he must immediately turn it about and make a kind of half joke of it. The serious, not the half joking thing was meant. The half joking thing did however answer a purpose. "We must laugh or die," was at bottom the thing felt.

I emphasize this phase of myself to you Paul because you, Brooks, and Waldo were all brought up in a different atmos-



phere. I think your atmosphere was as difficult as my own to penetrate, but it was different. The New Englanders and the Jews have always at least had the privilege of being serious. You see I put Brooks among the New Englanders. He may not have been born there but spiritually he belongs there and has in his makeup the beauty and the inner cold fright of the New Englander. That's what makes it so difficult for me to feel warm and close to him as I so often do to you and Waldo, although I respect him sometimes more than any other living man.

Is all this stupid? However, I will go on and try to get off my chest what I am trying to say. I have in my inner consciousness conceived of what we roughly speak of as the Middle West, and what I have so often called Mid America, as an empire with its capital in Chicago. When I started writing my conception wasn't so clear. Then I went only so far as to want health for myself. I was a money getter, a schemer, a chronic liar. One day I found out that when I sat down to write it was more difficult to lie. The lie lay before one on the paper. It haunted one at night.

Then you see I knew no writers, no artists. Everything was very much mixed up. When I began to know writers and painters, I couldn't abide the way most of them talked. They were also doing the American trick. They were putting it over.

You see, I had by this time got up out of the ranks of laborers and lived among business men, had them for my friends. I went to conferences, lunched with these men. They were always talking so earnestly and seriously about nothing. The nothingness back of the spirit of their lives led to sex messiness. Brooks, I believe, once called me the phallic Chekhov. I really do not believe I have a sex obsession, as has so often

been said. I do not want to have, surely. When I want to flatter myself, at least, I tell myself that I want only not to lose the sense of life as it is, here, now, in the land and among the people among whom I live.

Please believe, Paul, that I am writing all this to you not having your article in mind but rather in mind you as my friend, as a man I love.

Let me get on. You will see in *Windy* and in *Marching Men* the effects of a reaction from business men back to my former associates, the workers. I believe now it was a false reaction and carried with it something else. It is the thing Mencken calls sentimental liberalism. For a time I did dream of a new world to come out of some revolutionary movement that would spring up out of the mass of people.

That went. A break came. You will see it in *Mid-American Chants*. What happened was something like this. A new conception came. Will you read now the first of the "New Testaments"? "In a purely subconscious way, I am a patriot. I live in a wide valley of cornfields and men and towns and strange jangling sounds, and in spite of the curious perversion of life here, I have a feeling that the great basin of the Mississippi River, where I have always lived and moved about, is one day to be the seat of the culture of the universe."

Now you understand, Paul, something in me. There is acceptance in that. I take these little ugly factory towns, these big sprawling cities into something. I wish it would not sound too silly to say I pour a dream over it, consciously, intentionally, for a purpose. I want to write beautifully, create beautifully, not outside but in this thing which I am born, in this place where in the midst of ugly towns, cities, Fords, moving pictures, I have always lived, must always live. I do not want,

Paul, even those old monks at Chartres, building their cathedral, to be at bottom any purer than myself.

There are infinite difficulties. You with your quick warm nature, will perhaps never quite understand my slowness, or the slowness of men like Sandburg. I am stupid. You will never believe how stupid. There is something almost of the negro in me there.

This leads to misunderstandings too. There are men like Jones\* of the *Chicago Post*, who, having no doubt at some time heard me say something derogative to smart men and smartness, have got the idea fixed in their heads that I am without respect for old things, old beauty. Jones, for example, is always harping on the idea that I do not believe in reading the work of the old masters of my craft and that I am no respecter of words, am afraid of words. I do not blame Jones. If he has such a notion, it is because of something I have myself said.

I have had a great fear of phrase making. Words, as you know Paul, are very tricky things. Look, for example, how that man Mencken can rattle words like dice in a box. Our Ben Hecht, here in Chicago, has naturally the same talent but I happen to know he isn't particularly proud of it, not at bottom.

Being, as I have said, slow in my nature, I do have to come to words slowly. I do not want to make them rattle. And well enough I knew that you, Waldo, Brooks might do in a flash what I will never be able to do. You may get to heights I can never reach. That isn't quite the point. I'm not competitive. I want, if I can, to save myself.

And now you see this brings me to the point of all this. Granted I am slow and stupid. Now, at this time, in America, culture is not a part of our lives out here, in Mid America. We

\* [Llewelyn Jones.—Editors' note.]

are all, business men, workers, farmers, town, city, and country dwellers, a little ashamed of trying for beauty. We are imprisoned. There is a wall about us. You will see, as you get into the spirit of the "New Testament," how that wall has become a symbol of life to me. More men than you and I will ever know have become embittered and ugly in America, Paul. The flush-looking, hearty, go-with-a-slam-bang business men and others, what we have come to think of as the up-and-going American are not so up-and-going. They are little children. Immaturity is the note of the age and that immaturity is a wall too.

And so in my inner self I have accepted my own Mid America as a walled-in place. There are walls everywhere, about individuals, about groups. The houses are mussy. People die inside the walls without ever having seen the light. I want the houses cleaned, the doorsteps washed, the walls broken away. That can't happen in my time. Culture is a slow growth.

How silly to think you won't understand all this, that you have not understood from the first. Sometimes, however, you, Brooks, Waldo, all the men I love and respect seem so far away. I say stupid things, act stupidly. I grow afraid too.

You see all I want is to have such men as you know at bottom that I love what you love—that is enough. Artists have to be strangers to the body of the people now in Chicago, in Ohio, in all this empire of Mid America. I just don't want any of you fellows who are real, who love beauty and who understand more than I ever will, to be fooled by my crudeness or to be led to believe that I am not, in my own way, trying to live in the old tradition of artists. And that's all of that. "Thank God," you'll probably say.

You will know how I feel about the *Dial* matter. They had told me something about it, gave me to understand I would probably be the man, etc. After all, the *Dial* is the one thing

we have, they are sincerely trying for something the rest of us are after also. How could I be anything but pleased and flattered. Also the money will be a big help this year. I've got so I am not particularly well in this damp cold climate during the winter months and there are times when certain physical facts make it impossible for me to work. I have continuous colds and that poisons my body so that both body and mind are stupid.

I'll probably run away somewhere. There is so much work I want to do.

Today the rain falls dismally and winter is close at hand. I'll probably come to New York later, not for a dinner, but because I would like to see some of you fellows, will be getting hungry for the sight of you.

At least, O'Neill won't be able to wear tights on the street this kind of weather. I'll probably be safe until spring. At bottom, perhaps, I should fear you more than he anyway. Anyway Tennessee will want me to send her love. She would probably make it more direct if you would occasionally write to her.

With Love,

Sherwood

O, by the way, I am offering the *Dial* some of the "Testaments." Don't know whether they will want them or not.

Wednesday

My dear Paul:

I have thrown aside the almost completed novel on which I worked before I came to New York. Whether or not I shall ever go back to it, I don't know.

The truth is that I've been stumbling away at something that now at last perhaps is becoming a little clear.

You know that after *Windy* and *Marching Men*, I wrote *Mid-American Chants* and that led into *Winesburg, Poor White* and *The Triumph*.

The *Chants* were a making of new designs of color and emotions. They helped mightily.

And now, for nearly two years, I've been trying to make a new, more complex, marvelous prose leading out of this "Testament" of mine.

It may be accomplished, maybe not yet? I'd rather not speak of it to any man but yourself.

What leads me to speak of it now is a feeling of gratitude I have to you and that hasn't been rightly expressed. It's about the *Dial* article.

I felt so deeply the clear love you gave me in the writing of that and it did something to me. I can't tell you quite what but something that made you a finer man in the giving and me in the taking.

You see, if I am to do what I want to do, I need first that love one gets almost from women, perhaps completely sometimes, but that one wants also from men who stand on the same soil with himself, meet life on his terms, think his thoughts.

The thing has been healing to me—that's what I want to say. And this also.

I'm at work now and sometimes in the morning when I get up I feel that I want all of the several people who love me and whom I love to be saying, "Give this man abundance of love and love of life."

I do say that to the God for you Paul and will while I live. Say it for me too.

With Love,  
Sherwood

PAUL ROSENFELD

Chicago, Tuesday

Dear Paul,

The article is very beautiful, Paul, and in it I feel a hammering on and a breaking down of walls between us two. I have always wanted from you and two or three others just this understanding—not of what is accomplished—but of the thing aimed at.

For a long time I thought the structure of your own life so different from my own, that you would not see the road I was trying to follow and now you have put your foot on it so firmly and surely. Your article makes me feel as I felt when you and Tennessee and I walked out into the open space fronting the Louvre and as you and I sat on the bench before Chartres.

And one of the most lovely things in it is your recognition of my immense debt to the man Brooks. When you said that, my heart jumped with joy. I have been so sore at him so often but deep down in me I have always loved him so really. When I began first to read him in *Seven Arts* his voice was a great shout saying, "You are on the right road. You may never get to the sacred city but you have put your feet on the right road."

And other subtle things I did not know you knew, the escape from the dominance of women and children, the eternal begging of the question, the waiting for life to be lived by someone else to come after you.

I have said these things to myself on my prayer rug but did not know you battled with them too and were walking through the same grey fog. It is very beautiful and gives me the warmest feeling of living comradeship I've ever had. . . .

We will be in New York Sunday or Monday and you may be

sure we will be there with you on the thirtieth. Tennessee is going to stay until the 1st and I will stay longer. I'm thinking of sneaking off to the negroes for a month or six weeks.

With Love,  
Sherwood

Dear Paul, August 15, 1922

I will probably not come out this week end. Do not feel I am very good company—just now. I made an engagement to go off with a man who will talk all day about the theater or some other subject outside my world and my own thoughts will go gayly on.

Saw Wilson and left a few of the "Testaments" with him, a fine sensitive man. He looks like a fellow with good brain [illegible word] and feeling.

I'm doing some more "Testaments" and a story but the lady I'm wooing is that novel. I want to do something in it. Perhaps I want too much.

Seeing you always puts new legs under me. Wish to God I could ever have the feeling I gave you a tenth what you give me.

With Love,  
Sherwood

Reno

Dear Paul—

June 12, 1923

I suspected of course the reason for your not writing and as you supposed was only trying to bluff you. Anyway it suc-



ceeded and I am glad to know you are at work. Do I not know well enough the feeling of ineffectualness that comes with days and days of not being able to make ink flow.

Harpers have turned down what I submitted to them of *Straws*. They fancied, I think, it would be some sort of smart sharp comments on present day affairs—a sort of more quick-handed Sinclair Lewis, I suppose. Their turning me down will mean a sharper lookout for my finances during the year ahead, but I will get through all right and, to tell the truth, my sudden vogue of last winter frightened me somewhat. “How can a man be any good who gets five hundred for a story?” I asked myself more than once.

As for *Many Marriages*, I do understand perfectly your not having looked into it. What I wanted, I suppose, was the reactions of your mind to it as a complete piece of work. As it has fallen out there are not too many minds I respect really. Yours happens to be one of them, but I would not myself bother with any man’s work when I had a job of my own on and I think you are quite right.

You know Paul how delighted I will be to have my name on a book of yours. I suppose the delightful admirers we both have will look upon it as a log-rolling affair. Why not? Are we not both under the influence of Alfred—you for, o this long time, and I, I fancy, through your influence.

I hadn’t really much hope of prying you loose to come out here but you know, damn you, it is just your reluctance to leave your own hole.

The *Secession* crowd—“Out of Nowhere into Nothing.”

On the whole I fancy New York is not my place. This isn’t, to be sure, but there must be some place I shall find that I can

sit down in permanently after a time. My mind rather flounders about as yet thinking of it.

And of course I have not settled the affair here yet. *T.* may decide to try to throw a hammer in the wheel of Nevada justice. I am really sorry "Salome" did not take New York by storm if for no other reason so that she might have felt rather grand about it. That O'Neill\* is an odd little chap. A monument of persistence and pluck but not much clear-headedness, I fancy. It was odd he went off on that Salome line for the American negro. The workings of a mind that could make such a preposterous slip, while having so much that is first rate in it, is beyond me. You see I am responsible in a way. I put him on the negro trail. I am terrible about such things, get an enthusiasm, start someone else at it, and slip away myself. I think it rather preposterous to try to do anything with the negroes actually, but they are quite charming things to think about and to sit watching at a distance. And at any rate why Broadway? Why shouldn't they have worked away in their own hole for several years?

To get back to myself—my real interest, I suppose. I think I have had a fancy I was in for a period of eclipse. Perhaps it is only the tall grey mountains between me and so many of the people about whom I really care. As far as I could learn *Many Marriages* only perplexed people. I suppose from you I wanted to know whether or not it came at all as a clear note. Does the tendency we both felt in the life about us to feel life a bit clearer and sweeter in America remain? I presume it is just this subject you are to discuss in *The Port of New York*.

\* [Raymond O'Neill, a producer associated with the Ethiopian Art Theatre in Chicago.—Editors' note.]

What a splendid title! If this feeling remains and grows a little and if, in any way, one can contribute a little to it, life will be sweeter to the worker, that's sure.

You must know, Paul, that I am one given to quite terrible fits of depression that at times almost approach insanity. Only in work and in a few people in whom I feel the power to love do I escape. It is that has drawn me to Elizabeth, a steady sanity on which I lean heavily, a power to love and give real companionship steadily day after day with no mean inferiority in her nature. Among men I get this from you and I do want you to know, Paul, that it entails no demands. I want you to be able to work up to the full power that is in you, not to be unhappy, and I suppose I want you to love me whether I deserve it or not.

In *Straws* I plunge and kick like a horse with bad legs at the post. There is run in the horse but he dreads a little the moment when something within will compel him to plunge forward. I cannot blame Harpers for not wanting it. What am I to Harpers or Harpers to me?

I hope to get underneath a little. The book already has spots, people flashing out suddenly, thieves, racetrack men, workers—the fellows I knew and lived with long before I knew you or Stieglitz or Brooks or any of the people on whom I now so much depend. . . .

I'll be glad when I am clear of this place but I do work after a fashion and am far from settled in my mind as to where I would like to live. Between our two selves I wish Helen did not live at Westport. I might think of coming there and buying a little house. As it is I think of some place like Virginia. But this is all in the air, in the future. I would like to live for a long

time where I could occasionally see you and have talk with you.

And I am glad you are working and hope you will go on and on and that you will, now and then, write to me.

With love,

Sherwood

33 West Liberty Street—here.

Reno

July 4, 1923

Dear Paul—

Hot, still, lovely weather has come and at last I think I begin to work a little better. I begin to have some hope of *Straws*. Will I get over what I want? I am sometimes afraid, sometimes hopeful.

Young Wright wrote me of your kindness in having him at your place—a queer self-conscious chap. There is, I'm sure, some talent buried in him somewhere. He was boyishly grateful to you for having him.

That dear, dear Stieglitz. The other day I had from him one of the most beautiful letters I ever received. He made me a present of the two lovely things he had loaned me. Do you know the things, a tiny white house at the foot of a dark hill—clouds—a still hushed thing that fairly takes your breath.

Then another thing in clear light, the barks of a tree, young birches I think. There is something golden clear about it, and both things sing.

O, Paul, do you not wish you were a painter! I can't apparently write and try to paint both, and there is so much yet

I want to write. The days are so short, but now my nerves often allow me to work three or four hours a day.

Don Wright's speaking of your house made me think of it, as it was sometimes during the few times I was there, with the hills before the door and the orchard.

For all I have suffered and have worked this year I am glad I have made the move I did. Gradually a cloud that lay before me so long seems to go away. For a time I thought I might not work any more but now again I get up eagerly to the day.

I hope you are working well and finding companionship. It is hard to find.

The West—really, Paul, it is terrible underneath and makes you understand what most of America must have been a hundred years ago. I'll tell you stories of the chief citizens of this town someday that will raise your hair. Truly I fancy most great American families were founded on a basis we never dreamed of. Jim Fisk would be an angel out here.

But there is grandeur in the country itself.

Love to you,

Sherwood

Reno

Sept. 4, 1923

Dear Paul—

I have been thinking of you steadily all day. Perhaps working on this book makes me realize more and more what I owe you. It is a lot.

I have been thinking, too, of your little house, of the apple orchard on the opposite hillside, of your sitting in the room

there, you in the room in New York, at the piano, the soft light in the street outside.

I hope you are working well. I am, I think, pretty well.

I wrote Van Wyck a letter that may have offended. He did not answer. It was about the James book. What I tried to say to him was something about expressing himself to the real, the artist side of James as well as the other side. The Twain book has seemed to me year after year more ungracious.

"After all," I thought, "I am an artist." It seemed to me that, as an artist, I had a right to say something of the sort to Van Wyck. The man gives a lot but takes so little. He is to me so often like the man willing to love but unwilling to be loved.

I get something dreadful about the life of James myself but he had very fine moments. I read him after I came out here because I thought of Brooks as thinking of him and wanted to think of him too. It was a kind of connection with a man I admire.

One wants connections, clings to the thoughts of them here. I wish, before Brooks wrote his Twain, he had lived here for a time. There is enough vestige of the old life left, gambling, cheap women. We may be spiritual adolescents in the middle west, but here are infants.

There is nothing but the land itself and that isn't enough.

My book goes on. In a few weeks it will all be written through. As I have thought it over I have come to realize that I belong in an odd way with Dreiser, Masters, Sandburg, rather than with you and Stieglitz. There is only this difference. To you men I have consciously gone to school, more than you know.

Elizabeth keeps me essentially happy and at work. When I look back I do not know how I have had the courage for this

PAUL ROSENFELD

year, but all that has happened, all that can happen is nothing to what I have got.

Love to you,  
Sherwood

Reno, Nevada  
October 5, 1923.

Dear Paul,

Reading in your book starts me thinking again of something that has been in my mind a good deal these last few years.

So many of your own things I have read set in the *Dial*, *Vanity Fair*, *New Republic*, etc., etc. They appear in company with smart little essays by Bruce Bliven, Wilson, Burke, Oppenheim, etc., etc.

It isn't so much that these men are to blame either. They are doing two things—insisting upon themselves and making a living.

I keep wishing your own work did not have to appear in such places and that I could give all magazines the go-by myself.

There is something about a book. It has its own integrity, makes its own atmosphere. One comes to a book of yours and gives himself to it. Your own delightful, alive sense of prose has full play.

I'm not damning necessity but I do wish all your work could appear so.

Do you yourself not have a different sense in getting work ready for a book, than in getting it ready for a magazine? I

wrote a charming story recently, last fall, and turned it over to Otto, who sold it for the highest price I ever got. I took the money, have lived on it, but have had a mean feeling just the same.

I dare say it's senseless egotism. Is it? I myself would like only to make books. I have to think, "What sense would I have of Paul's prose, if his books did not come?" Perhaps the book coming finally clears up the other. I don't know. Do you have any such feeling as this one I am talking about?

Sherwood

Reno, Nevada

January 15, 1924

Dear Paul,

The sickness is gone enough to again let me sit up at my desk. The novel has, however, slipped away. The shreds of it are lying about. In a day or two, I hope to begin picking them up again.

Have just again read the Bourne article. If the book will hold so high, closely-knit, a tone in it will be very beautiful. This, dear Paul, is what I meant when I spoke of your aristocracy. No one else in America has it. You write of things of the mind and spirit without blatting. My copy is now wornout. I send it to people, ask them to read it and send it back. Such writing, when it comes of you, makes me more proud and glad that I can call you my friend than I can tell you.

I am glad about [illegible word]. I thought the last story in his book wonderful but when I read of some negro woman, that "her mind was a meshbag of pink baby toes" I shuddered. I



thought X—— had indeed laid his warm fog over the negro's mind.

Poor Wilson—read his thing in last *Vanity Fair*. It made me want to weep. I couldn't hold anything against him after that. About *Dial*, Gregory, etc., I'm leaving the whole matter of where my things may be published to Otto Liveright. Can I be blamed for having an impersonal feeling about *Dial*? They seem to be always apologizing for me. I don't want particularly to be apologized for. The Gregory seems to be afraid to either praise or blame. The effort to keep her balance makes her, in my eyes, appear like one who has her feet on just nothing.

What about Seldes? I have a real liking for him. Is he out, at, or in *Dial* now? Why does he not write me? What did he do in Europe? Did he write the book he set himself to write? Is the Gregory setting the *Dial* tone? Is she an editor?

A wild wire from Alfred Maurer. A man named Weyhe had come to his place and bought all his things. There is to be a show for which I have written a short catalog foreword. It would be quite wonderful to me if the thing should go.

Huebsch, at least, is enthusiastic about the new book.

Your comments—"Ohio Pagan" and "The Sad Horn Blowers"—they are both true criticisms, something fragmentary, there. I felt it and had to ask myself, "Shall I try to go back and carry them through?" The old Chinese used to write a thing called "the short stop." The notion was to touch something off and then let it complete itself in the reader.

Is this an excuse? I don't know. I have destroyed many fragments. These I decided not to destroy and I could not work on them as my mind was reaching toward something else. I refer you to a song of *Mid-American Chants*.

"I'm the broken end of a song myself."

It's time. Perhaps I shall never quite complete, round out, anything. Often enough I have to give just the broken ends.

With Love,

Sherwood

Reno

1924

Dear Paul—

I think you are wrong about one thing—blaming your publisher and his bad advertising for the lack of success of your book. I am sure, however, *Port of New York* will sell better.

Your not having a big audience is simply the result of your being what you are. You take high grounds, do not pander, and your mind is a complex one.

This year out here has reopened my own eyes. Although my contact with the ordinary American man and woman is closer than your own has been—because of circumstances, I had got pretty far away from him.

Here in these western towns the little tricks of speech and thought are exactly those of the middle-west of 20 years ago. They read Robert L. Stevenson, laugh over the jokes of Mark Twain in his *Innocents Abroad* period.

I went for an evening at the University here. The group that invited me were the intellectuals of the college. All the men who have made our life were unknown to them. They had heard faintly of Sandburg—because he gives his *Shows*—Brooks, Bourne, Waldo, yourself, myself—names unknown to them. It was a little like talking to the people of Mars.

I think you and I had agreed long ago not to ask too much. Isn't it implicit that in trying at all we have made ourselves more or less foreigners in the country?

The scholars—that is to say the best of them—understand the situation better than we do. I had a long talk with David Prall, Elizabeth's brother—in the University of California. You would like him—a gentle fine sort—sweet and solid. Such men have to feel and feel about to find one young man among thousands who cares about anything.

Well enough I know that we scribblers are all a bit the actor—we hunger for the quick response of the audience but I go back to my formula that you simply can't expect popularity and continue to be what you are. . . .

Frost [illegible word] hell. I met the man. He only  $\frac{1}{4}$  comes through I'm sure.

As for myself, I have a certain advantage in letting my own emotional life express itself in tales. The tale carries people along a little.

They are really disappointed and baffled.

And at that, Paul, you are the only critic of my work who gives me food, checks me. Others merely obstruct by bad praise or bad blame.

I am inclined to get fat then, in mind and body. For the first time in years my nerves are comparatively quiet. Am I gathering strength for work or decaying? I don't know yet.

I need men more than ever, you most I think.

Whether I can talk, be social, warm, outgoing—I do not know. There is no talk here. One has to restrict every conversation to anecdotes, never say quite what one means. I'll be glad to get away. It won't be long now.

A few days at San Francisco were like getting breath after being long stifled.

I hope Stieglitz is not too terribly overworking. God knows, I would like to see him saved for long years yet. I got an excited wire from Maurer—Weyhe had bought all his things. I tried to write a little foreword for the catalog of his show. Hope it wasn't too stupid.

Love,  
Sherwood

Dreiser wrote very sweetly about my dedication to him. Of course, I shall be proud as Lucifer for my name on any book of yours.

Reno  
March 19, 1924

Dear Paul,

It seems to me I ought to tell you again about this book of yours. These are the things of yours I have so long wanted to see in one compact volume, the things of yours that make you stand out alone among American prose writers for your fine tenderness, balance and real aristocracy.

As for myself and my relations to you—it is because of what is in this book that I love you as no other man. The book makes me feel that, although I may blunder and do much blundering work myself, yet I can never go at my work cheaply because of my love of the *you* here set down.

It would be pretty second-rate to make comparisons but X——'s [book] just came to me a few days ago and seemed

PAUL ROSENFELD

to me as hurried, cheap and personal as your book seems to me impersonal and beautiful.

It is a solid stone on my own road, Paul.

What registered in my mind really when it came was that I might well lose the love of such a fellow writer, through some lack in myself, but he could never lose my love.

Sherwood

New Orleans

August 10, 1924

Dear Paul,

I have been reading again in *Port of New York*. Whenever I am in any creative work I go to your work and draw from it something I need. I wonder if you have been discouraged that it has not been more warmly received. It seems to me clear warm writing, feeling, thinking. Nothing else I touch feeds me more directly.

I have put away the Lincoln thing. Whether or not I can ever do it, I don't quite know. There was something wrong with the man and, unlike Brooks, I cannot feed myself on other men's failures. Perhaps Lincoln was too far from my own time, impulses, feeling.

My mind has wanted a greater immediacy, more right-nowness.

And so I have plunged into a novel of American life now. I call it a "Fantasy" and want in it the war, the new sex consciousness, negroes, a slow fantastic dance of sounds and thoughts if I can get it.

Financially, I've been up against it, and I must choose be-

tween going back into advertising or trying the lecture thing. My books won't sell. *Many Marriages* sold—for nasty reasons I'm afraid, *Horses and Men* hardly at all.

Then the new magazine *Phantasmus*—after big talk—turned out to have no money and I didn't get paid.

I trim sails, that's all. Not quite such gaudy sox, scarfs, etc., perhaps. I'll try to say something in the lectures anyway if they want me.

The new book flows like a real river so far. It should dance, a little crazily, bags of corn in the moonlight, negroes, a man and woman at the center of it. I'm at it hard anyway and the days have joy in them. I've an idea there are fields ahead in which I haven't tried walking before.

I hope you are all right, Paul, and that you are working. Stieglitz sends good letters. When you get back to America let me know. I'll no doubt see you in the fall.

With Love,  
Sherwood

*S. S. Roosevelt*

December 8, 1926

Dear Paul—

I got the *Dial* and read the piece on New Mexico. Well, of course, it is a difficult thing for the reader to get. How am I to say? So is a good water color by Marin.

It isn't my way, of course, all of these strange jeweled adjectives. I want my own prose to go like great waves washing the sides of ships—like the Mississippi going down to the sea. It never does but that is what I want.

You aren't me—more tense, quickly alive, nervous, more modern.

I get a substance—something felt. After reading, I couldn't put it into words, no more than you did.

Is that required?

Is that what the writer undertakes to do?

I think he undertakes something more and that you reach for it.

The substance comes something like a perfume. It's enough for me.

Sherwood

Feb. 8, 1931

Marion, Virginia

Dear Paul—

It seems a shame sometimes that we should be so lost to any immediate touch with each other any more. Don't you ever feel any need? I do.

It hit me again reading "Bread Lines and a Museum" in *Nation*, a realization again of how much I have fed on your mind and feeling ever since I first knew either.

I suppose I've damn little to offer in return. I have gone through such dead years.

Again I do feel some life. I have rather gone over quite completely to labor, not I think as a propagandist exactly but rather in a kind of effort to get at the poetry of struggling labor, machinery, men caught and being crushed in machinery, etc. I don't know how effective it is. I feel some health again in it.

Your article seemed so healthy to me. After all man back of

the Modern Museum is Crowninshield and Phillipps [sic] of Washington. It is perhaps just a new death. Dead fingers reaching again.

With Love,  
Sherwood

Puritan Hotel  
Kansas City  
January 20—33

Dear Paul—

For a week now I have been constantly conscious of you—as though a voice in me were saying, “Write to Paul,” and so I do. I dare say it’s separateness—as though we were back in the war again. I guess we are—have never come out of it.

I keep thinking of the time when we felt warm, real friendliness toward each other and each toward the work of the other and wonder sometimes what happened to us. I get bits of you—the *New Republic*, etc., and feel the same fine dignity in your attitude toward life.

Perhaps you are disgusted with me that I seem to have gone over to the Communists. I haven’t really, Paul, but my background is different. I had a rather lucky break—buying the little newspapers in Virginia—lucky in that, while I myself made no money out of them, I could use them to establish my family. I made them over—entire—to my children. Bob, the oldest boy, bought them of the other two. The girl—Mimie—is married, to a young college man at Amherst, Mass., and John—the second son—the young painter—works on the newspapers as a linotype operator. He has a little house in Marion



and lives with another young workman, going to the newspaper half days.

But how do I know you want my news? I take it for granted because I want yours. We have had some bad hours together—usually my own crudeness—but we have had marvelously good ones. You have always been to me the truly fine aristocrat among us all. I guess you know that.

I had some success with *Dark Laughter* and got some money. I think it hurt a lot. For some reason you can't have money in America now.

Then it was gone and I began going about to the factories. That I presume led to my going toward Communism. I got so ashamed sometimes, doing nothing, always standing aside.

So I have been living—letting almost everything go—myself broke, most of the time, in a single room in Marion, and drifting about in a small car. I am doing that now.

I do have the feeling, Paul, that there is something in the country. It is so beautiful sometimes. For example, now I have just come into the Middle West again and am here in this quite terrible city—so perplexed. I am in a cheap hotel, called The Puritan, that seems full of down-and-out prize fighters, ball players and their women . . . a surprising number of them manage to keep drunk . . . but my room is quiet.

I sent off a book of short stories . . . not so good . . . at least not all of them.

Did you like my novel, or have you read it? I thought it was something. I've another.

With a New York man, an ex-vaudeville man—named Arthur Barton—I made a play out of *Winesburg*. I think it is rather real.

Please do drop me a note at Marion. It will come on to me. I want to know about you.

So  
Sherwood

Marion, Virginia  
July 14, 1933

Dear Paul:

Your letter and the article in *Scribner's*, oddly enough perhaps, give me much more pleasure than pain. In particular the letter seems to me a coming toward the rest of us, at least I give myself the pleasure of thinking of it as a coming toward me. After all, Paul, we are all human. I do not think I have ever wavered in my respect for you. Particularly in the last year I have felt very much the need of the thing about which you are speaking. Something went very wrong with me four or five years ago. I felt myself approaching what was perhaps my own ivory tower. A curious desire for separation—a desire to draw myself away. I think that, for a time, my prose got much attenuated. I give to the woman I just married the credit for taking me out of that . . . for awakening in me again the desire to participate in life at any cost.

At any rate, I did again desire with all my heart to participate. I think I knew that mistakes would be made in such things as manifestoes signed, etc. . . . declarations made that might be at bottom nonsense but—

Paul, I had rather got on the other side, here in Virginia, I was too much respected. I was invited to spend week-ends at

the governor's mansion and word was sent to me by United States senators asking me to come to their houses. Virginia seemed proud to have me as an adopted son. The trouble with all this, as you well know, is that I am not respectable and do not desire to be.

I knew well enough that I did not belong to all that. I belong much more to the submerged than you ever can or will, Paul, and tried in my own way to get back to the people I feel are at bottom my own.

I think I went through a transition period. I got into my little car and went about to the factories and lived again close to workers. I began again to write. I do think that although it got practically no recognition my *Perhaps Women* was a fine and beautiful thing. I think in some places in the book I did really catch the rhythm of modern machinery and put it into a kind of singing prose. I think that *Beyond Desire* comes off although it also got little recognition—perhaps for the reason that it satisfied neither the Communist nor the Capitalist. I do not believe that what you say of it is true. I think the workers in it are as true as the women.

As for the new book of short stories, that you say you have not read, most of them are four or five years old but at the end of the book there is a story called "Brother Death," written last winter after the rest of the book was in press, that I think does refute all you say of me.

Now, Paul, as for the matter of the authors' trip to Washington. The manifesto X—— insisted on handing to the president's secretary I never saw, although I dare say my name was attached to it. I did not write it and had nothing to do with it. It was no doubt somewhat pretentious. You know our X—— as well as I do. He has a great sweetness in him but

also there is a passionate desire always to represent himself as something big and important. I wish you could have been in the room with us when we were addressing the president's secretary. To that ridiculous man, the president's secretary, X—— kept insisting—childishly I thought—that we were an important group of men and of course that idea amused me. I do not know that I actually pulled at X——'s coat but I do know that part of the time I half wanted to laugh, half wanted to cry—knowing as you, Paul, must know I know that we were of no more importance than any group that could be picked up anywhere on the streets. I do think we had a right to protest, as any group of citizens would have a right to protest, against the shabby treatment given the ex-soldiers in Washington. As for the fiasco—made a fiasco I believe by X——'s insistence on our importance in the political state—I think that I did later rather give the whole thing some dignity and meaning by my open letter to the President in the *Nation*.

To go back to the manifesto—that you, Paul, take more seriously than I ever did—I have in the last year or two seen a lot of real suffering. On all sides, I have seen men's fighting spirits broken down. It may be that I got reckless. After all, Paul, you have to trust someone. I am not a politically-minded man. I think you once said that I was not socially-minded but I do not think that statement is true. I wrote to Wilson, saying to him that he could sign my name to anything he was willing to sign; and if there were mistakes made, my name signed to things lacking dignity, I certainly do not blame Wilson, taking it for granted he would often be confused as I am.

During the last year I have reached out all I could. I have been writing letters to men all over the country asking them

to try to state for me, as clearly as they could, what they now thought and felt. I wanted to write to you but felt you withdrawn. After all, isn't it as bad to withdraw as to participate too recklessly? To my letters to other men friends, I have been pleading for the same kind of comradeship you speak about. Do not think that I have not missed you. A hundred times I have had the pen in hand to write you but have not done so because I have felt that you did not want me. I think there is no one at all close to me who has not known all the time that I have loved and respected you and your ability and have wanted from you even an attack rather than silence.

Paul, when I do a thing like "Brother Death" with its real delicacy and strength, and from you and Brooks—the men I have always thought the most sensitive of all our critical minds—no response at all—only the cry that I have inadvertently let my name go on some political manifesto you do not like—

How can I help feeling, Paul, that it is you fellows in your isolation who are failing in the real Communistic spirit.

How, God helping me, can I help feeling that?

With Love,

Sherwood

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## EPILOGUE \*

THE MAN who seems to me, of all our American writers, the one who is most unafraid, is Mr. Paul Rosenfeld. Here is an American writer actually unashamed at being fine and sensitive in his work. To me it seems that he has really freed himself from both the high and the low brows and has made himself a real aristocrat among writers of prose.

To be sure, to the man in the street, accustomed to the sloppiness of hurried newspaper writing, the Rosenfeld prose is sometimes difficult. His vocabulary is immense and he cares very, very much for just the shade of meaning he is striving to convey. Miss Jane Heap recently spoke of him as "our well-dressed writer of prose," and I should think Paul Rosenfeld would not too much resent the connotations of that. For after all, Rosenfeld is our man of distinction, the American, it seems to me, who is unafraid and unashamed to live for the things of the spirit as expressed in the arts. I get him as the man walking clearly and boldly and really accepting, daring to accept, the obligations of the civilized man. To my ears that acceptance has made his prose sound clearly and sweetly across many barren fields. To me it is often like soft bells heard ringing at evening across fields long let go to the weeds of carelessness and the general slam-it-through-ness of so much of our American writing.

\* [This appreciation of Paul Rosenfeld, which appeared in the *New Republic*, October 11, 1922, may well stand as the epilogue to Anderson's letters.—Editors' note.]



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*Part Five*

**HOMAGE**

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## WINE OF GOOD OMEN

MY LAST conversation with Paul Rosenfeld was perhaps the most significant, certainly the most tragic, I ever had with him, and the longest I ever had with anyone over the telephone.

Paul phoned me two days before his death. The recent death of Stieglitz had been a terrible shock and a profound grief to him. But the memory of Stieglitz being what it was for him, it acted as a spur rather than a depressant, and he was soaring into the future that morning. He suggested our dining and spending the evening together the following week before he left for the Adirondacks, *en vidant un bon pot de vin*. There were several things, he said, he wanted to discuss with me—continue to discuss—“especially the question of the centers of force—*nihil* you once explained to me (and which I have thought about a great deal)—and your conception of rhythm as an element of stability.”

He also reminded me of another talk we had had on the magic of words when I had shown him an article by Dr. J. C. Mardrus on some “magic” Egyptian texts. Mardrus quoted a passage from Ernest Renan which at once kindled Paul’s enthusiasm—that wonderful enthusiasm:

A man who had nothing but precise ideas about everything would be a fool. For the most precious notions that the human intellect harbors remain in an obscure light at the

back of the stage, and if we were to be cut off from this back-stage, the exact sciences themselves would lose that grandeur which is the result of their secret connections with other eternal truths that we are only beginning to suspect and that constitute for us a link with the mystery of the world.

The ancients understood the all-power of the *Underneath of Things*.

It is from them we have inherited, through the intermediary of Greece, one of the most beautiful words in our language, the word *Enthusiasm*—En Theos—the inner god, the God of the within.

Happy the man who carries a god within him, a living source, an ideal of beauty that he obeys.

Referring to this quotation, Paul said: "You will see me returning next fall the same incurable enthusiast. But now, I hope and believe, with the power of controlling the *En Theos*."

He then spoke to me of certain painful spiritual deceptions he had suffered, as well as demoralizing financial losses. "I feel that all these unpleasant experiences of the last decade have made it necessary for me to revise my scale of values and, moreover, in spite of the emotional anguish I went through during the war, I am almost grateful to it, for it acted as a very much needed filter."

But we never drank that *pot de vin* together. During that long conversation I had felt that Paul was seeing a vision of a new and happier future, and I had looked forward to toasting with him his new lease on life in a wine of good omen. It was a tragic moment for death to choose.

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## PLOWMAN OF THE FUTURE

THE IMAGE of Paul Rosenfeld can hardly be dissociated from his piano, his collection of the works of living painters and sculptors, and a library of books representing the writers of our world. Eagerly he pursued the new note, the young and urgent intonation, the genuinely experimenting spirit. He wrote and sought to write, not as an external interrogator merely, but as a close participant in the lives of his subjects, and his lifelong friendships included an amazing diversity of gifted people.

He was that unique phenomenon in our America—the explorer-critic, an interpreter with a sensibility attuned to many modes of utterance. His intuitions were full of the radiance of color, the echo of music. His writing, with its occasional labored effort at sensuous mimesis, had the authority conferred by the love that intimate knowledge alone makes possible. So Paul Rosenfeld became a spokesman for much that was aspiring, hopeful, and triumphant in American self-knowledge. To him the process of achieving well-formed impressions in writing was a tangible joy. It was—he once remarked to me—like the taste of apples.

The world of color, of sound, of evocative words was his by choice: it was where he truly lived. In this realm he lost and found himself, and it was part of his tragedy as of his strength

that the impulse to identify himself with the expressive forces he pursued had to compensate by its richness and variety for a lack of technical scholarship and of rigorous self-discipline. He could not quite be, as I think he would have wished, an American Sainte-Beuve. No one knew better than himself where he had not succeeded. But no one in our generation more faithfully and consistently surrounded himself with exemplars of the living spirit in all media. At its best he knew the value of his work, felt himself a plowman for the seed of the future. He respected and revered his craft, labored to give iridescence and resonance to the written word, devoted his life to rendering to others an equivalent of his acute perceptions and exquisite experience. So his life became and will remain, as he strove in our distraught world to make it—an affirmation of the human spirit through the delights, the realizations, and the conquests he sought and accumulated and knew.

For years he and I walked on week ends, in spring, winter, and autumn, along the trails in the Ramapo Mountains and the Highlands of the Hudson. He was as far from being a naturalist as any city-bred boy. But the love of outdoors, quick responsiveness to the breath of pure air, the feel of rugged earth and rock under foot, the liberation that came of attunement to the seasons and talk under the open sky—these were deeply part of him and part of his work and its residue in the American heritage.

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## A NEIGHBOR'S FACE

DURING the last years of his life Paul Rosenfeld was as familiar to me as anything or anybody I saw on West Eleventh Street, New York, where both of us often walked. He was usually coming west from Seventh Avenue with a big paper bag in his arms—coming home, I supposed, with provisions for himself and his friends. I was not one of those friends. I simply saw him on the street, in the middle of many a morning, hurrying toward me and smiling; hesitating some days so that “Hello” could pass between us, but sometimes not even doing that. I know nothing of the man inside the brown clothes I saw. I rarely or never encountered him indoors. I do not pretend to a wide knowledge of what he wrote. I simply saw him, day after day, beating his serene path between store and study, and beaming in a very intelligent, a solemn sort of way, upon the undistinguished block he trod. I cannot claim that we ever came to a full stop and talked, except once when we exchanged a few words about Marsden Hartley’s poems. For the most part he was a figure merely, a moving fixture in my life and in that of Eleventh Street. And there he still is, or should be. For no person I have ever known, at least in this fashion, was a more perfect picture of good will, of humorous and unsentimental charity, of unconscious yet substantial love for things

and persons that exist. He ought to be there yet, and probably—consult the faded house fronts—he is.

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*Roy Harris*

## ANTICIPATING A CONCERT

PAUL ROSENFELD believed! He believed in Man. He believed in the creative power of Man. He believed that the creativity of Man was the essence of Man and that without it, Man was stupid and destructive.

Paul believed that this creativity was like an unknown secret, almost like a seed that could rest unproductive in fallow earth for generations and suddenly spring forth again, in all its glory.

He believed that this creativeness had little to do with comparative knowledge. He, himself, a most learned man, believed that learning was only an oft-recounted record of the achievements of robust, victorious spirits, those people who refused to have their days and nights blanketed with Time's measurements or their utterances smothered with the idioms of their predecessors.

Paul believed that creative men do something because they have to, not out of ambition but because they cannot help themselves. He believed that this urge which bedevils them arises

from the needs of their kin, those who walk the same earth, under the same skies.

This creativity, he believed, should bring forth new music, new painting, new architecture, new literature. He believed it more than any other man I have ever met.

Rosenfeld began searching for the things he thought must come from America. He did not know exactly for what he was searching, he only knew what he did *not* want. He did not want elaborate conglomerations of old European idioms offered up as new creations coming out of a new civilization. He did not want a patchwork quilt to be offered as royal robes for a new people.

Nor could his criteria be technical. He was not technically equipped. He made no pretense of being so equipped. But he compensated for his technical limitations by careful aural study of new works. He took his searching very seriously; and because neither his ear nor his eye was technically trained, he searched the hard way.

He invited composers to his studio to go over their works with them carefully. He laboriously played the harmonies and rhythms of these new works on his piano, getting the feel of the music into his blood long before the time of performance was at hand. Then, if possible, Paul went to rehearsals and previews before the performance of a new work; and when the hour of performance came, he was always there, psychologically prepared to listen to a new work. He was alert. He would be one of the strong personalities in the audience who was looking for new music with honest hope in his mind and heart. It mattered little to him whether the performance was being held in Carnegie Hall, Town Hall, Juilliard School of Music, the



New School for Social Research, Columbia University, New York Public Library, a WPA hall, Princeton festivals, Yaddo festivals, in Washington, in Philadelphia, or in Boston. And if there was a possibility of hearing a second performance, he was even more delighted. He felt that if a creative idea had blossomed, he himself was richer in a richer world; and that if the attempt to create new music had failed, he himself was poorer in a poorer world. He identified himself with this creative process. He lived for it. He knew with deep instincts that unless we have this creativeness our civilization is dead; and he did not want to be an indifferent citizen in a dying civilization.

Searching was often unrewarding, even aimless, because Paul was wise enough to know that one never knows when or where the creative life-stuff is going to push up through the crust of convention. Rosenfeld had a horror of the American success formula. When he perceived creative imagination in a young artist, he immediately began to fear for him in the market place. To his credit it must be said that the public success or failure of any given work had absolutely no influence upon his own reaction to the work—absolutely none. He was there to feel the life-throb; and if he felt it, he was exalted; and if he felt it was a mere palming off of old formulas, no matter how slick it sounded, he was disgusted.

Paul Rosenfeld became increasingly appalled by the political, social, and economic disintegration in Europe. He had seen the powerful music business corporations devour the musical resources of our nation. He had seen how nonchalantly they had continued their brutal treatment of America's native culture. He felt that Big Business, totalitarianism, ruthlessness, asocial selfishness, are all synonymous and that all lead to a

trampling on the common people and a manhandling of all social and creative instincts in mankind.

Nevertheless, to him the creative artist was a warrior and a hero—and part of his heroic strength was the ability to suffer neglect without losing faith in humanity or confidence in his own creative gifts.

He devoted many of his critical works to championing American composers. Those works are all in print, in books and in magazine articles, in libraries, for those who are interested. And they will remain as testaments of a living faith that nourished us all.

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*Edna Bryner*

## THE MYSTICAL ASPECT

PAUL ROSENFELD worked, in his own phrase, “like a galley slave.” What he did he always felt was right. This was so even when an article he had spent weeks on was rejected because it was not “interesting to the mass of the people.”

“Should one retire like Brahms,” he pondered, “and do exercises for years and then appear with a new classicism that nobody likes?” Said he once: “I know I have simply to work for myself and for the few persons who may benefit from my

work." This attitude made him redo many a rejected article "as beautifully as I know how," and even to project "a whole book of just such pieces!" He did make such projects—courageously—and brought many of them to fruition—arduously—as his substantial volumes attest from the valuable *Musical Portraits* onward to his last thought-provoking, never-to-be-finished "Among the Kinds of Literature."

Throughout his richly varying work in the esthetic field he displayed an ardently devotional quality. This caused some of his fellow workers to call him a "God-seeker." He made answer, once, that his belief "if I have any at all, is that man is pubescent and growing towards an ARTIST who will create in the joy . . . that I have when I am writing or getting up things to write. I am glad to be part of something as fine as an artist creating. But often the artist is a poor devil in hell, possessed of a magic instrument to save him from the fire and powers of death, but still a poor devil and by no means superior to the average sensual man."

To judge himself rightly was part of the integrity of his personality, an article of his faith.

Nor was he far from being a mystic. He experienced the rare moment—which not so many "religionists" have had—when he had the pure glimpse beyond the external world that held him enthralled in servitude to unraveling its magic. He wrote:

Sometimes when I see something new, when I see a part of the truth in such a way that I feel I have something to go forward to, I seem to be in connection with a space before me, across which something new lies. It occurs to me now that this space is really like a mirror which smiles and reflects something afar off, something which shines into life but has very little concern with the world or people's wel-

fare in it (their material welfare, whether they live or die) but with this effect on the world—that it shows that this world is not all—and therefore it makes what happens to one here of no consequence whatever.

Whether that shining thing, whatever it is, is seen by one or exists for one after death, I do not know. But just at present it has the effect of minimizing the world, at least by showing that life itself is only part of something else. . . .

The religious people say that one is put here to see more and more of that thing which shines into the world and of which one is aware, as in a mirror, in times of strength and vision. But I am not there yet.

Perhaps he is. But where he stood was a good place, a high one, not to be filled by anyone else.

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*Frank Jewett Mather*

## FIRST FORAYS

SOMEWHERE around 1920 I first began reading the criticism of Paul Rosenfeld and conceived a real admiration for his talent. He had, for so young a man, a wide experience of all the arts and a reading well digested and carried easily. He even then promised to be a successor of the brilliant and versatile James Huneker, but as a stylist he was still in pains of parturition.

PAUL ROSENFELD

About that time the old *New York Evening Post* was seeking an art critic—a job I had held down myself for nearly six years. I wanted the *Evening Post* to take on Rosenfeld, and made overtures to that effect. Nothing came of the matter. But I do wish to have it on record that I had such confidence in Paul Rosenfeld at his beginnings that I wanted him as an *Evening Post* colleague and as my successor.

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*D. H. Moore*

## A CORNER IN REALITY

THERE WAS a color to Paul. There was surge of an intellectual sort—a sense of motion even when he was still. There was that fabulous fund of past knowledge he dipped into as carelessly as you and I reach for a cigarette. There was a constant revolution of any subject until all the facets had been revealed. In brief, the method, if we can call it that, whereby Paul resolved conflicts for young writers, was as embracing as the titles on his shelves.

What more can one say about this critic?

Yet something more must be said.

He was a great and kindly man, a sincere and amazingly honest man, more deeply read than any of his contemporaries

and more deeply sensitive to the changing facets of the creative experience.

Others will write of him, and ably, and the measure of his praise should be full. But regardless of how inadequate and partial such appraisal of him must be, yet something must be said.

There has long been talk of Paul helping the young writer, the young painter, the young composer, and it survives. This is as it should be. But who among us can say Paul did this or that and thereby helped *me*? More than anything else, one believes, Paul's help was the mere knowing of him, the comforting and reassuring knowledge that a man such as Paul was existing within our ken. We took courage again and again from his adamant conviction that there was nothing but ultimate good in the pursuit of the true and the beautiful—above all, his everlasting and unyielding *faith* in the creative experience.

"Doubt anything but Art," he said.

That was probably the first of many phrases he uttered to me that were subsequently and hastily jotted down. He said it many times and the day he walked into my apartment and saw the phrase pasted across the back rest of my typewriter, he smiled his pleasant smile and said, "You'll get on."

There are those who hold that Paul's excellence as a critic was due to his enormous library and the fabulous extent of his reading. But there was something else there, more deeply felt and seasoned than the mere abstraction of dead men's notions. He had a heart as vast as any Gothic cathedral and a mind as catholic in appreciation of his chosen role as Guy Fawkes in jail. No other man of our time has so nobly bridged and blended—by understanding of an almost occult sort, by his deep and

warm humanity—so many facets of the creative experience as the past three decades have fashioned for the artist yet unborn.

Those whom he championed are today the bulwarks of the creative experience in America, and need no further listing here. His standards were high—carefully high—both for his own work and the work of others. His inimitable writing style was a wistful, eager blending of classical austerity and sensual enthusiasms—deep, rich, ebullient, decorative, penetrating. Whatever the subject, he was ever readable.

Language, he was wont to say, contained the secret and the art of suggestion and sensation. To him, half the joy of writing lay in fashioning a phrase that could murmur of spring and gold-dusted butterflies—in calling forth the west wind in a wintry sentence—in invoking the smell of lilacs in moonlight mingled with the grime of the dirty city streets. To control the surge and flow of passage and page was to him a heartfelt delight.

Once, over a cup of Irish tea in my apartment, I had asked for some advice about going on with my writing. He said:

“No—I don’t think you should give it up. I don’t know where, but you have a corner in Reality. That reminds me of a letter from George Santayana wherein he said a philosopher should have an umbrella stand in a museum so that he’d have enough to get by with, plus a corner in Reality.”

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## STEPS TOWARD ACHIEVEMENT

I HAD completed several large sections of music for E. E. Cummings' ballet scenario *Tom*, and on recommendation of the poet I went to see Paul Rosenfeld because, as Cummings said, "Paul has asked me about you and your work. This is a fine occasion to meet him. You should know Paul."

I did go to see him. I played for him as best I could the selections from *Tom*. The discussion of this music was encouraging to me. Despite my youth and inexperience, he was frank in his criticism, full of enthusiasm for my approach to Cummings' subtle and difficult scenario, sure of my talent and my attitude toward the musical art. Most of all, I was thrilled that he at every right place knew just what I meant to achieve in this score, as though he himself were functioning as part of my very own inner creative process.

It was Rosenfeld's encouraging words which helped send me to Europe that summer. With the financial assistance of his friend Cary Ross, he arranged to have me complete Cummings' ballet in France, and to discuss it with Leonide Massine. Thus it was that these good men—Paul Rosenfeld and Cary Ross—helped me to take further steps toward my achievement.

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## CRITICAL PATRON

NO OTHER American figure so consistently championed new music and other forms of art as did Paul Rosenfeld, nor with such evocative sensibility.

To him many contemporary workers in the arts are indebted for their first *useful* words of recognition. Recognition, that is, at the moment when it was most needed and when it was not forthcoming elsewhere. In love with every aspect of man's creative expression, endlessly intoxicated with that expression, he held the torch of which George Bernard Shaw wrote to help light the way for mankind. He was an illuminating ideal type of the creative patron.

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*Harold Clurman*

## INSTANT GRASP

BECAUSE of his remarkable capacity to concentrate his senses and to communicate their findings immediately, Paul Rosenfeld was enabled to disclose the true nature of what he con-

fronted much more readily than those who have to bring repeated study to the objects at hand before they are able to make any reliable report. Thus Rosenfeld's review of the French composers of the Group of Six (Milhaud, Auric, Poulenc, *et al.*) at their very first American performances was virtually definitive. His sensory attentiveness and receptivity were so great that very difficult new works by composers like Stravinsky or Hindemith were brilliantly registered at practically the first hearing so that very few corrections were needed in the ensuing years to complete his first reactions. It is not only that Rosenfeld was gifted with wonderful assimilative powers but his entire organism was so endowed that he could order the data of his impressions and measure their final worth even as he seemed to be in the simple act of recording them. This lent his work not only the merit of efficiency, but gave it a gratifying aliveness, a vibrancy derived from the sources both of the music and the man who had heard it.

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*Dorothy Norman*

## TALENT FOR HELPING

PAUL ROSENFELD had, one might say, a talent for discovering new talent. He had a constantly growing wish that each new twig of talent he might discover would grow, not simply into

a great branch on the tree of art, but would perhaps become in its own right the most towering tree of all.

He was as a man possessed with the need to go ever deeper; to correct, to perfect, to affirm ever more effectively. Yet in trying to understand and to say yes to life, it was as though the world itself became constantly for him a more and more fear-some thing. It was as though he gave himself so completely to others that he was increasingly in danger of destroying himself.

No one could have been more generous than he to every new shoot of talent. No one could have been more loyal than he to every developing artist. No one could have questioned himself more relentlessly than did Paul Rosenfeld.

He wanted so enormously to finish his own self-propelled work and succeeded so eminently and fearlessly in giving aid to others to get on with theirs—mainly at the very time when no one else was caring, noticing, or reaching out a helping hand.

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*Lehman Engel*

## MANHOOD OF A MUSICIAN

THIS IS WHAT made me want to know Paul Rosenfeld before I had reached manhood. It was a simple, all-explaining declaration of his principles of criticism appearing in his *By Way of*

*Art.* He wrote: "I write because of a sympathetic relationship existing between myself and something invisible and unknown to me, enveloping me like a living atmosphere and moving within me like my blood."

I had just reached twenty-one when I first met him. He was warm and simple and smiling and encouraging and sensitive. Aaron Copland made the actual introduction at a meeting of young composers. Paul was interested intensely in each of us.

He asked to see some of my music. It was not enough for him to hear scores played on the piano. He also wanted to hear what I thought about my music and what I hoped to do with it. His interest was genuine and respectful. He also wanted to hear my opinions on other composers' music—living composers and dead. We discussed history and dancing, painting, politics, photography, and films. All this he enjoyed himself. Beyond his enjoyment he had a superior purpose for his questioning and discussion.

He was deeply serious in trying to learn about new things. He wanted to meet the creators of new art, attend the rehearsals of new music, listen to discussions between artists. The American artist knew him as a close friend—interested, eager, alert—a friend keenly watchful of each creative effort. He wanted to make me—as he did many another young composer—think out my art, and to broaden it. It was the beginning of the manhood of my musicianship.

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ANGER AT LEVITY \*

IT WAS sufficient merely to set eyes on Paul Rosenfeld to appreciate the diathesis of his personality. Plump as a grain-fed pheasant, he was a man of brave parts and deep culture. Like so many artists, he was extremely sensitive to criticism, but sensitive more perhaps on behalf of his friends than on behalf of himself. One had only to use such a phrase as "inspired photographer" in connection with the name of Mr. Alfred Stieglitz, and he would "go up in the air" as surely and rapidly as the lizard gardener in *Alice in Wonderland* shot up the chimney. . . .

But however angry Paul Rosenfeld [would] become on account of one's levity, one [could] not really feel angry with him in return, for the simple reason that the man [had] á deep and generous heart, and this quite apart from the fact that he [could] write prose that has the effect of drawing the poison out of one's tail. Paul Rosenfeld's style has to be reckoned with. At its worst, it is true, it does remind one, as an amusing critic once suggested, of "a merchant of Samarkand unrolling with slow deliberation sashes of silk," but at its best it carries one's imagination on strange flights. And how generous Mr. Rosenfeld [was]. How free with his money! Many an oyster,

\* From *The Verdict of Bridlegoose*, by Llewelyn Powys. Copyright 1926, by Harcourt, Brace & Co.

many a good duckling, have I eaten at his expense, at the Yale Club, or on one occasion at a Syrian restaurant, side by side with Mr. Stark Young, the grave critic of the theatre, who, as the seasons pass, comes more and more to appreciate the society of New York City, and who was once described to me by Mr. Reginald Pole, that long-neglected ghost of Hamlet's father, as "the leader of the young intelligentsia."

But not only has Paul Rosenfeld fed me, he has clothed me also. When I was spending a winter in the Catskill Mountains, where it was cold as the devil, he must needs present me with two blankets, the finest, by God, that I ever saw, made out of the wool of ewe lambs, gleaming white, and warm as polar-bear skins.

I once visited the Metropolitan Museum with him, and he sat me down before an enormous Persian carpet. At first I was as oblivious to its sumptuous appeal as any rook-boy who had been brought in from a field of sprouting barley; but gradually, as I sat there, looking at its silken tapestried woof and at its intricate design of trees and flowers, I came to understand something of the pleasure that my friend was deriving from the silent contemplation of so superb an example of patient craftsmanship. Truly, it was as if no artistic achievement of the past escaped the notice of this world citizen who was acting as my gracious monitor. It was as though the unique faculty had been given him of evaluating, with a fine personal discrimination, every piece of stone that has been chipped, every piece of wood that has been carved, every piece of cloth that has been woven since our ancestors first separated themselves from the animals.

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## UNDER AN UMBRELLA

It was the night nobody in The Village  
Could write a poem. A dog-pee rain  
Made the streets stink. The noisy wounds  
Of neons dripped down on everything.  
Turning from the newsstand, I saw an umbrella  
Pushing up through the fatty, red soup,  
And a cheerful, sad little man got out  
To stand under the tattered canopy beside me.  
“Hello!” The voice breathless as a schoolboy’s;  
Tolerant, wise eyes in a round, pinkish face—  
A sense of something watchful and scurrying  
About him; a story-book rabbit, the kind  
Lions would do well not to offend. “Lousy  
Weather,” I said. He pushed up on his toes,  
Rocking gently back and forth. Then suddenly  
His hand shot into his pocket and a crumpled  
Ten dollar bill was shoved into mine. “I’ve been  
Very busy,” he said, whipping the umbrella open with  
An almost angry gesture. “Heard you’d been ill.  
Busy in the library every day. Remember me  
To your wife, will you? My book goes badly. . . . Ah,  
Ah, good night. . . . I’m late to the concert, I think.  
Probably bad, but there’s something new  
I want to hear. . . .”

That was the night nobody in The Village  
Could write a poem. Almost nobody remembered  
That Mozart, Hölderlin, and Anderson  
Were alive.

Almost nobody any damn time at all  
Would wade through a river of lions  
If they thought there was "something new"  
On the other side—whether a man,  
A poem, a vase, a symphony, a painting,  
Or a light  
Hitting down out of a cloud.

"*Hello!*"—the earnest, funny scurrying—"Is this  
Seat taken?" "No, Paul, sit down. I think you'll  
Get a kick out of hearing them play their own music  
For a change. . . ."

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*C. G. Paulding*

## AN EDITOR'S AFTERGLOW

THE EXTRAORDINARY thing was that he came into our office  
and said: "A brief picture of the origin, history, distinctive  
features, and idea of the Conscious Faerie Tale will not be out



of order"—and we said, "All right, it won't." We printed the same sentence, together with all that went with it, in the *Commonweal* of April 12, 1946. He did not force us to do it. It was just that he was interested in the subject. We weren't; we hadn't been. It was just that he was obviously interested in the subject, rather than merely in providing us with a piece and so it seemed that we would have to let him write it.

There are not a hundred receptionists at the *Commonweal*. A man came in the door and I spoke to him. He said he was Paul Rosenfeld and the name didn't mean a thing to me. He said his name quietly, just because you have to say a name, and not as if saying his name was all that he had to do. I should have known his name but I didn't. I would have known it if someone had told me he was coming. But he just walked in. He said that E. B. White had recently written *Stuart Little*, and that this was a conscious faerie tale and that he wanted to explain the origins of the form. I knew, of course, Goethe's *Das Märchen*, he said, and then he talked with me as, I suppose, he talked with everyone—that is, thinking that his fellows must be intelligent, and that they must be interested in writing if they had a job that was concerned with writing. He talked with the rare directness and courtesy of the man who assumes—without ever doubting, without even bothering to find out—that the man to whom he is talking is capable of understanding.

It makes you feel wonderful to be talked to that way and, of course, no pretenses can survive such a trust. I told him I did not read German, or know Goethe, or his *Märchen*, and that as for Grimm as a writer, everyone could say he knew him because there would have been his book on a table in whatever house it was that he lived in as a child, but that the memories of Grimm, or of Andersen, or of any other faerie tales (con-

scious or not) were subjective, and the wallpaper in the house where the stories had been read aloud, the garden round the house, the fountain, and the iron dog standing guard over an iron pheasant, were subjective memories also, because the house, the garden, the dog no longer existed, and childhood was gone also. There had been two wars, I said, and the faerie tales were all washed out. But, he said, if there are a hundred wars my business and your business is to see that not a single thing is washed out that we can save. The past has to be carried into the future by any of us who can remember anything of the past (the way, say, the streets looked in the past). Otherwise the future will be that young men will write, or paint or compose music, with everything to rediscover all by themselves, as if nothing had existed before them, as if the civilization men have built for hundreds—for thousands—of years were something they did not need.

We published his piece and I wished that I had known Paul Rosenfeld all the years when I might have known him but was in a house across the street, or in Europe, or in the same house but in another room.

He came back to the office. He would come in and sometimes he would write the piece he talked about and sometimes not. We would look at the review copies on the desk and almost any time there would be something about Henry James and he would talk about Henry James, and sometimes it would be a book by a young man, unknown, and he would be wondering how to help him.

Then one day he came in because Stieglitz had died. Read carefully what he said about his friend: "Taking nothing for himself, striving incessantly to find means of permitting them to continue to work, he saw certain fellows through to the very

hour of his death. Actually he created a sort of spiritual climate in which it was possible for artists to give their best by holding all things to their fairest level, as he did while affirming the value of true art and standing up to the American world day after day for its sake." Rosenfeld might have been speaking about himself, only he never spoke about himself.

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*e. e. cummings*

poem

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little man we  
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*John Marin*

## A VOICE IN THE EVENING

One night—not so long ago—were  
assembled a small company of us—  
a partaking of our Host and Hostess' hos-  
pitality and the food was good and  
the wine was good

Two of us were en-  
gaged in talk—I know not now  
—what about

when suddenly there  
poured forth a voice in rapture over  
some of the Early English poets

An unforgettable bubbling  
forth akin to the music of the swift-  
flowing stream—spontaneous—instinctive  
words—not too many—just enough to express

and I thought  
and I have thought since— Oh for a  
—Dictograph—to capture that—that came  
from the lips of our to be remembered  
one—Paul Rosenfeld

A man of much feeling  
A man of fine feeling  
Of much of—one might say—saintly attributes  
Of sordid thoughts and ways a  
fundamental abhorrence  
Of the senses

His mouth tasted of the good  
food—mostly cooked by himself  
His nose—I am sure—smelled the good smells of the Earth  
His eyes saw the beauty  
His ears responded to the music  
——A man pretty well equipped—  
Loyal—courteous—considerate—  
an old world born graciousness  
and if you will take the best the word can  
mean—the born gentleman—  
and as to—whether he loved a woman  
I don't know— This—I feel I do know

he loved women—he treated them  
with a courtesy that was beautiful  
to see

    If he had a weakness  
—The pity of it was—a questioning of  
his own virile senses

    Yes our friend has left us—  
let it read— Our friend has left us much  
—his spirit



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\* Though other articles in this publication also were signed with this same pseudonym, not all were written by PR. Quite possibly he was the author of an essay on jury duty in Volume I: 584-9, April 1917.

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### *Editors' Note*

Miss Edna Bryner's valued contribution on page 245 was originally titled "The Magic of the External World." The present version is a condensation of her original, which opened:

"I only know that my motive has always been the magic of the external world," Paul Rosenfeld could write to a friend, almost nostalgically, towards the end of a lifetime of struggle to discover what really lay behind the constantly varying shapes of musical notation engaging his faithful ears, of canvassed color arrangements arresting his alert eyes, of word sequences engrossing his ardent mind.





